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STUDIES IN MEDIEVAL THOUGHT

No 65





# STUDIES IN MEDIEVAL THOUGHT

*by*

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## PREFACE

DESCARTES, the founder of modern philosophy, has left in his *Discours de la Méthode* a precious testament for all plain folk who wish to learn. The first key to knowledge, he insists, is the real desire to know. All knowledge is so far one that the non-specialist, if conscious of his own limitations, can go a long way everywhere by sheer patience and common sense. He writes: "It is not enough to have a good intellect, the main point is to apply it well."

Those whose advance is very slow can gain far more if they always follow the right way, than others do who hurry on and depart from that way." And again, reviewing his own years of brilliant yet barren study in the schools, wherein everywhere he had found uncertainties which passed commonly for certitudes:

"I thought that I might meet far more truth in the reasonings which each man makes concerning matters which touch him nearly, where the event will soon punish him if he has misjudged, than in such as a man of letters makes in his own study concerning speculations which produce no effect, and which possibly concern him only in so far as he will perhaps pride himself upon them in proportion as they deviate from common sense."

In order to know what men's opinions really are, I should rather note what they practised than what they said, not only because, under the corruption of our manners, there are few who are willing to say all that they believe, but also because many do not know themselves, for, since that action of the mind whereby we

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believe anything is different from that whereby we know our own beliefs, the one often disagrees with the other."

It is in that informal spirit that I write here. This is not in any sense a complete history of Medieval Thought. Few men could write that within this compass, even if the field were not already occupied by Professor Étienne Gilson's easily-accessible *Philosophie au Moyen Âge*, a marvel of completeness, compression, and clarity. This present series calls for something widely different, less systematic and more personal, unconventional, yet attempting fairness towards the more conventional views. At an early stage, therefore, I try to estimate the advantages and disadvantages of Latin as an international vehicle of thought. This section, which, so far as I know, breaks almost entirely new ground, is intended to supply the non-specialist reader with fresh points of view. Thence I pass on to a slender historical thread, from St. Augustine to the verge of the Reformation, with fuller treatment and special emphasis on the more original figures, and upon those subjects which have interested ordinary men in all ages. Immortality, Toleration, Bible Exegesis, and so on.

Thus alone could I approach so great a subject even in a confessedly popular series like this. Miscellaneous reading in medieval books has constantly prompted reflexion on those problems from that non-specialist standpoint which is natural to "each man, concerning matters which touch him nearly," and which we commonly take in talk with our intimates. That is all that I can attempt to offer to my readers.

I owe special thanks to Prof G. R. Potter of Sheffield for his revision of my proofs, and to him, with my wife, for the compilation of my index. G. G. C.

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# STUDIES IN MEDIEVAL THOUGHT

## CHAPTER I

### THE ROMAN ANCESTRY

THE Middle Ages—that is, the period between the fall of the Roman Empire and the Revival of Learning—have much to teach us beyond their mere dramatic interest. Even the remoteness of that period, and the contrast between many of its ideals and ours, makes it sometimes more illuminating than the centuries which stand nearer to us in time. Any study of past history is an introduction to the problems of real life, and there never was an age in which British readers had better opportunities for such a study than now, or more urgent need of it. We stand in this generation at one of the greatest crises ever recorded, especially for the educated classes. Are rival ideologies to breed a series of ever-intensifying conflicts? Are the horrors which are now being perpetrated on the Continent destined to spread to us? That is the root question of the present day; all other political and social questions are subordinate to that. For a whole generation at least, there is likely to be a real conflict between society as we understand it, and the society of Bolshevik or Fascist innovation, and the nearest approach in past history to that conflict



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is the story of those Ages which followed upon the fall of the Roman Empire, and from which Europe emerged very slowly, and with continual effort and with many ups and downs, until revolution came in the sixteenth century. The story of the Middle Ages is the story of a vast catastrophe, involving the whole of Europe, and of gradual convalescence from that almost mortal sickness. Therefore, although the Middle Age is the period on which, naturally enough, historians generally lay least emphasis, yet the story of those times may often come more nearly home to us, in many ways, than other periods which are much nearer in time. We have here an unmaking of the whole ancient world and the gradual making of a new social order, and the lessons we have to learn from those times often bear very directly upon some of the most insistent of present-day problems. Moreover, there is a true and inspiring story of adventure in the courage which sustained those best men of the past during their struggle to save civilization from the shipwreck of the barbarian invasions.

Three ideas must be grasped clearly if we would start with a comprehension of this new world which grew up gradually from the ruins of the Roman Empire. First, of course, the idea of the Empire itself. This was far stronger, and swayed men's thoughts more completely, than we can easily conceive. Next, the Church, which grew to over-shadow the Empire. And thirdly, Islam, outside Europe, but pressing so hard as to be a perpetual menace. Here Church and State were bound together, under despotic rulers, into a comparatively compact whole. Thus this new civilization, with the concentrated force of bald simplicity in its central idea and of despotism in its government, was as sharply con-

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trasted with medieval Europe as Japan contrasts with the Europe of to-day

Let us try to realize all that the Empire was to the mind of the Roman. Some time before the barbarians broke in, that Empire was going downhill rapidly, if not very evidently at first. We shall see this best if we compare it with the Republic. The Empire was at peace, but this was partly the peace of decay. Under Constantine, who first gave Christianity a legal position in the State, men led easier lives, on the whole, than under the old Republic. But that ease, that comfort, was no real measure of the vigour of the State. The Republic had been at perpetual war, within and without, but full of life. Marius and Sulla, Cæsar and Pompey had fought to the death for political supremacy—literally to the death, for the man who got office commonly killed the rival who had just failed to get it. Under Augustus the Republic, weary of this civil strife, allowed that single man to hold all those offices together, and to hold them for life. On the one hand, Rome thus avoided all the turmoil and bloodshed of party politics such as they had been for the last few generations. But, on the other, she had now exchanged her consuls, prætors, and so forth for a single Princeps, that is, for a despot ruling under constitutional forms. This, for the present, was all that the world wanted: peace at any price, even at the price of despotism. The city was still theoretically the political unit, men's ideas of duty seldom went beyond their city, just as nowadays they seldom go beyond their country. The cities wanted only a little freedom of self-government to work out their own salvation. The emperors gave that; they were rather *τύπαιοι* in the Greek sense than tyrants in the modern. The great

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men suffered. Roman senatorial families were decimated ; no conspicuous and dangerous statesman was safe from political murder , but the mass were happy . the mass were passive under this despotism. Even at those times when there were a number of rival emperors fighting for supremacy, the individual citizen was very little involved. And whenever a single wise emperor was on the throne, the general population was happier than it had ever been under the Republic. The Golden Age of the Empire was that of the Antonines. Gibbon wrote with perfect truth, a century and a half ago . " If a man were called to fix a period in the history of the world, during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the succession of Commodus." (A.D. 96-180 )

But this was a peace purchased at too heavy sacrifices. On the one hand, it was maintained on the frontiers by an army less and less national . At home, again, it was kept by a sacrifice of public spirit . Tranquillity rested rather upon the apathy of the citizens than upon any vigour of self-control. Under the Republic, the comparatively small population had continually seethed with civil dissensions. Under the Antonines no regular soldiers were needed to keep the peace among the hundred million inhabitants within the Empire. Except a small garrison at Rome, all the thirty legions were on the frontiers ; within two-thirds of the Western World there was a sort of League of Nations. But this tranquillity was mainly due to exhaustion ; real political life had been killed by perpetual proscription. The earlier Emperors had deliberately cut off, one by one, all the

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great men who showed too much political independence. As Gibbon puts it, "The last of the Romans were condemned for imaginary crimes, and real virtues." The people allowed all this because the one thing they wanted was peace after all those struggles of the Republic, and because the Emperors, whatever other crimes they committed, did on the whole give peace to the mass of their subjects. That was the *Pax Romana*, a period of such peace as Europe had never enjoyed (when Gibbon wrote) since the Roman Empire fell, and such as she has only enjoyed twice since Gibbon's death—between Waterloo and the Crimean War, and between 1871 and 1914. Therefore, as the natural outcome of this *Pax Romana*, we find a devotion amounting to adoration for the Emperor, and for the state of things for which he stood. He embodied in his own person the *majestas* of the Roman Republic, i.e. of the rulers of the Western World. He was high priest as well as absolute arbiter of war or peace; men placed him among the gods at his death, and sometimes in his lifetime. Meanwhile, this *Pax Romana* gave to the innumerable cities of the Empire not only continual freedom of individual development, but a far wider outlook and a consciousness of far greater things. Men grew out of their earlier devotion to the city alone; their horizon widened; imperial ideas filtered into their minds. They felt the greatness of living under one single vast system of government, one form of education, and one broad peace. Moreover, there was the growing unity of wider ideas which such peace made possible through constant intercommunication between province and province. The greatness of all this seemed to them absolutely divine; and it has been rightly said that this explains that Emperor-worship

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which to us seems so strange. In the Emperor they worshipped Rome itself, and the *Pax Romana*, and the majesty of Rome—undefinable, perhaps, but felt in every fibre of their being. Each Roman citizen was part of a system which, with all its defects, was immeasurably more imposing than anything before it or anything elsewhere in the world, and the vague reverence of a polytheistic mind could have found few better objects of adoration than this

Thus for four centuries—for as long a time as separates us from the Reformation—loyalty to the imperial idea had become more and more deeply rooted in the mind of the Roman people. It had been to them, all that time, a necessary part of their outlook, a thing without which civilization would be inconceivable. And, when a great fact of this kind once becomes part of men's outlook, it assumes ever-increasing proportions; all kinds of other ideals collect round it; it gathers force like an avalanche as it rolls along. So was it with the ideal of the Roman Empire. If we wish to understand the Middle Ages, we must grasp not only what the *Pax Romana* of those four centuries actually was, but also what (after it had been broken up) men believed that it had been, and dreamed that it would be again. Time makes all small things smaller, but all great things greater. Things not worth remembering disappear and are forgotten. Things worth remembering appear not only as the great facts they actually were, but also as the far greater facts they tried to be. Mankind's indestructible yearning for progress seizes upon these things when they are gone, takes encouragement from them, and builds upon them its own higher hopes for the future. And this it is which explains the revived Empire of

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Charles the Great. When, in 800, he restored the Roman Empire in his own person, he was really looking quite as much forwards as backwards. He was inventing many things which he believed himself to be imitating. His knowledge of the actual was imperfect, but he knew what he wanted for the future, in order to discipline those heterogeneous and half-barbarous nations under him. He knew that there had once existed such a great central power ; a power wise on the whole and beneficent. This, then, he conceived after his own fashion ; he pursued his own aspirations in the firm conviction that what once had been might be once again. So, throughout the later Middle Ages, even men's ignorance of history contributed to exalt the idea of the Empire. No man doubted the existence of this Golden Age in the past ; no man doubted that the tutelary genius of that past had been (under God) the Roman Empire. All men, therefore, took it for granted that the central aim of ideal politics must always be the reconstitution of that Empire in its former strength and beneficence. In no other form could they conceive the peace they yearned for, the peace that practical men needed for bare existence, and that idealists needed for the prosecution of their aims.

Thus the growth of the Christian Church illustrates the fact that, even in what we are accustomed to regard as the purely intellectual domain, character is of greater value than intellect itself, in so far as we can separate the two. Socrates in the heyday of Athens, Roger Bacon at the crown of the Middle Ages, Descartes, the greatest early pioneer of modern philosophy ; Darwin, who, perhaps more than any one man, has helped to shape the modern view of life—all agree practically upon this point ; that, enormous as are the purely in-

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Intellectual differences between man and man, still more important is the will which directs those intellectual functions. We must not blink how much depends on accurate observation, a retentive memory, and imagination to group observed and remembered facts in new and living combinations. All of these, certainly, are of immense importance ; but still more depends upon the man's determination to arrive at such measure of truth as his own head can hold. We may compare the mind to a photographic camera ; there are vast differences between one and another , yet almost the meanest, if directed straight at the object and focused with patient resolution, will give a better result than the finest instrument used carelessly, or even deliberately misdirected with that perversity which we sometimes see in the most brilliant intellects. We must bear this in mind with regard to the medieval thinker

In many important respects, medieval thought is so patently inferior to the best Greek and Roman speculation on the one hand, and on the other hand to modern science, with all its richer experience of the past, that we are as much tempted, upon a superficial view, to underrate the services of medieval thinkers as we are to overrate the moral side of medieval civilization. A closer view is more likely to convince us that, at least from Charlemagne onwards, the forward growth of Western thought was continuous, even though it were sometimes only the growth of a thick young underwood sprung from the decay of the great forest trees. And this is true to a great extent, I think, even of the days before Charlemagne. Much of the apparent weakening of thought during the decay of the Roman Empire was due to its popularization. It was vulgarized by becoming

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*vulgaris* in the classical sense ; by becoming the property of the multitude. Gibbon rightly emphasizes the absurdity of Tertullian's boast, that a Christian mechanic could readily answer such questions as had perplexed the wisest of the Grecian sages. But beneath that absurdity lies the great fact that Christianity might compel the mechanic to reflect on the deepest problems of life and death. In that, as in other ways, the new creed was at first essentially democratic ; and we may trace in the progress of Christian thought something like the action and reaction which we trace in the French Revolution. First, the passionate assertion of liberty, equality, and fraternity, the conviction that all believers have been made "kings and priests unto God." Then, in the Middle Ages proper, a despotism welcomed as a relief from anarchy, and then again, at the Reformation, a fresh revolution and a re-establishment of something resembling the original democracy on a lower but securer basis. This consideration may do much to temper our regret for the passing of classical civilization. Even in the earliest period of the Middle Ages, what the ancient philosophies lost in dignity and precision, they gained in direct influence upon character. High abstract speculation must always be the privilege of the few, but the main results of such speculation can be brought home to the many at God-sent moments and by God-sent men. The multitude will then assimilate such thoughts, make them into flesh and blood, roughly and tumultuously, after the fashion of the multitude, yet in the grim earnest of people whose life has been not among words, but among things, and this very revolution will be found to have fertilized the old fields beyond all hope or expectation.



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It is difficult, in some of Cicero's philosophical writings, to avoid the suspicion that he is playing with words, sometimes even in full consciousness of their emptiness. When he discusses whether a good man can be happy even on the rack, he provokes the sarcastic comment attributed, rightly or wrongly, to Professor Jowett: "Possibly a very good man upon a very bad rack." But the blundering Christian at whom Gibbon mocks, in those early days, was wholly concentrated upon the search for salvation. He sought for Truth as Tennyson's Lucretius sought Tranquillity

Passionless bride,  
Yearn'd after by the wisest of the wise,  
I woo thee roughly, for thou carest not  
How roughly men may woo thee so they win

And the last words of such a man, looking back upon his own life of thought, may well have resembled those of Mark Pattison at the end of his long and laborious Oxford career

"My first consciousness is that of stupidity. A very feeble germ of intellect was struggling with a crushing mass of facts and ideas which it could not master, and with the tyrannical force of more powerful intelligence in the persons around me. Slowly, and not without laborious effort, I began to emerge, to conquer, as it were, in the realm of ideas. It was all growth, development, and I have never ceased to grow, to develop, to discover, up to the very last."

It is thus that we must conceive the earliest stages of thought in the Dark Ages, after the lights of Augustine and Boethius had gone out.

Thus we may go farther than "grim earnest," and speak of the deadly earnest which marked some of these men; for the time soon came when they carried their

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lives in their hands ; and, from a very early stage onwards, their stake was not only this mortal life, but eternity itself. Such an early apologist as Justin Martyr (d. 148) might take a position of extreme tolerance, and count Socrates or Heraclitus as Christians in effect, since they lived for the truth and Christ is Truth. But the spirit of exclusiveness grew rapidly, and lent fresh significance to the belief in life after death. Ideas which had been vaguer in the Hebrew and pagan religions gathered force and emphasis in Christianity, especially when persecution came in to embitter this unpopular minority, and, with persecution, the temptation to anticipate a future world in which the persecutor would himself suffer all and more than he had inflicted. It soon became a fundamental belief in Christianity that a man's last moments decided for him between an eternity of unspeakable bliss or of unimaginable misery. For bliss, baptism was the one gate of entrance ; for, as we shall see later, the few timorous exceptions do but go to prove that rule. Therefore hell is the fate which attends not only good pagans but even the unbaptized offspring of the most pious Christian parents. This doctrine, which is often believed to be an invention of Calvinism, has, in fact, a far completer medieval pedigree than some of the points which men regard as most definitely characteristic of the Roman Church. The only doubt, practically, was as to the amount of pain which there would be in this inferno. The majority, as we shall see, gradually tended to the denial of any physical pain. Yet so great an authority as St Augustine postulated even that. Medieval philosophy was hypnotized by the most literal interpretation of those words of Christ "Many are called, but few are chosen." That, and the "com-

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pel them to come in," will go far to explain much that we shall meet with later on.

The comparative unanimity of our remote ancestors in these and similar beliefs is explicable mainly by their horror of past anarchy, social and intellectual. In comparison with this, even the strictest discipline was often welcome. That healthy urge to unity which is one of the highest among man's social impulses was often exaggerated into a cry of the herd instinct "Let us all believe together, and those who will not shall go to the stake in this world, to eternal fire in the next." Thus we may explain, on the one hand, the remarkable devotion and self-discipline of the highest characters. But it explains also the carelessness of the multitude, who never took the current doctrines in full earnest.

In thinking of the conversion of the Roman Empire, we must remember that each individual convert yielded not only to some individual converter, but far more to the cumulative force of an imposing body of belief. Here again we can interpret history in the light of the modern theory of evolution. The fittest survives, but the fittest is not an individual, it is an aggregate, a society. One of the first real lessons of Darwinism is the vital necessity of the social instinct. No individual, keeping to himself and separating himself from the society of his fellow-men, could possibly have survived. The wild beasts, or his own wild fellow-men, would soon have killed him. So, again, in the intellectual sphere. A single man, however successfully he might himself arrive at the clearest possible view of the universe, would not survive in the intellectual sense except so far as he could communicate his intellectual acquisitions to other people. He would be a mere bubble on the stream of time,

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leaving no trace or memory when once he was gone. Therefore, in thought, the main factor, the factor which ensures ultimate victory, is not only the amount of abstract truth that a man can attain to—not only the extent to which he himself can avoid error—but, even more, the extent to which this abstract truth can be communicated to other people. For thus only can it become an organized force, a living and spreading force, instead of the mere latent force which it must have remained so long as it was locked in his single mind, or even in one or two others. Truth must be not only light, but also heat, capable of kindling otherwise inert stuff, and converting that into further light and heat. In other words, that spark of truth which kindles the warmest social feelings in the largest number of men, and which casts for that largest number the clearest light upon their path through human society, is the fittest truth to survive, both according to the Darwinian creed in science and the democratic creed in politics. The Roman Empire was the greatest social structure the world had known; but the Christian Church had in itself the making of a greater structure still, and still more lasting. We cannot really understand the victory of Christianity so long as we study it only in the individual; we must above all things consider it in the society, the *Church*, as it was nearly always called throughout our period, or the *Churches*, as it had been earlier called and was destined again to be called in modern times. From the moment when Constantine made the Church not only possible, but even a privileged corporation, she grew rapidly in organization. Already she has begun to imitate the orderly gradations of offices in the State, from henceforth she will reproduce them exactly. In each *civitas*

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there will be a bishop, in each *provincial capital*, an archbishop. The hierarchy will thus be so exactly modelled after the State that a map of Ecclesiastical France just before the Revolution will be also a map of the Roman imperial administration there. Moreover, these ecclesiastical units will retain those forms of ancient Roman municipal self-government which die out in the State. The priest, the bishop, are elected by their flocks, in the Church, there is real public deliberation and discussion. The bishop has his Council of Priests, his *Chapter*, the archbishop has his Council of Bishops in a *Synod*, on great occasions the whole Church meets in *Council* as at Nicaea. And, as a thing more living than the State, it begins soon to assert its independence of the State. In the East, where all goes on under the eye of the Emperor, this independence is very limited, yet, even there, an Athanasius can defy Emperor after Emperor for conscience's sake, and secure the final defeat of Arianism. And in the West, where the bishop of greatest dignity sits in Rome, the Church grows more independent still, especially after the division of the Empire between East and West. Thenceforward the Bishop of Rome inherited that prestige which attached still to the very name of Rome—a prestige which the civil power had to a great extent lost. By the ancient forms of election and deliberation, he kept a hold over the people far closer than that of the civil functionary, imposed on the city from above. When the barbarian invasions came, and the governors and civil magistrates fled or were slain, the bishop remained at his post, and it was with him that the invaders had to reckon. Moreover, the services of the Church kept up the Roman language, and thus did much to impose it upon the christianized bar-

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barians In short, the Church maintained the great Roman idea of universality, when the civil power had lost it She was, in a very real sense, the offspring of the Empire We shall see as we go along how far Hobbes was right when he wrote · “If a man consider the original of this great ecclesiastical dominion, he will easily perceive that the Papacy is no other than the ghost of the deceased Roman Empire, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof”

## CHAPTER II

### AUGUSTINE

IT is very common to date the real beginning of the Middle Ages from the division of the Roman Empire between Rome and Constantinople in A.D. 395; and this date coincides with the literary activity of the man who closes ancient thought and begins medieval thought—St. Augustine of Hippo. His philosophy admirably illustrates the tendencies of Christian thought which I have indicated, its intense vitality, its emotional character, and its consequent limitations. This year of the partition of the Empire stands midway in that century between Constantine's death in 337 and the second sack of Rome in 455—the century which (as Harnack points out) was the period when the Church absorbed nearly all that share of ancient thought of which she remained in possession throughout the Middle Ages. Constantine had made Christianity into a favoured religion, there was still for more than half a century a very active inter-communication between the Eastern and Western dominions, the Church borrowed rapidly and deeply from the philosophy, the literature, the discipline, and the art of the great Empire that was now so soon to pass away. St. Augustine's life fills most of this great time, he was born in 354 and died in 430. His book which he called *Confessions* created a new *genre* in literature. It is a

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work of startling originality and power from the purely literary point of view , and it portrays not only the facts of his life, but the growth of his thoughts ; nor of his alone, but also of that contemporary thought which helped to form him, and which he helped so much to form His father and mother were both natives of Northern Africa , by this time most of the great Latin writers were provincials. The father was heathen, the mother Christian, and Augustine's description of her is one of the imperishable idylls of literature. He always learned easily, but the first book that gave him serious thought was Cicero's Hortensius (now lost) which, in his seventeenth year converted him to the serious pursuit of truth He became Professor of Rhetoric—in modern terms, Classical Lecturer—at Carthage , then at Rome, and finally at Milan But his mind was occupied all along with deeper problems than those of his purely professional work he wanted something that might help him to solve the riddle of existence and supply him with an ordered scheme of life. For nine years he embraced Manichacism—a creed which, sharing many beliefs and moral impulses with Christianity, sought to avoid the obvious philosophical difficulties of Christianity by supposing a dualism in the government of the universe. To the Manichee, God and the Devil were co-existent from eternity and almost equally matched , until at last at the end of the world the Good Principle shall finally triumph, and the evil shall be chained for evermore This dualistic creed supplied Augustine with real spiritual nourishment , but he felt an increasing distrust of its theory of the physical universe. Its metaphysics appealed to him with their emphasis on the lifelong struggle between good and evil in the human soul as between



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light and darkness in nature But in the domain of physical science the Manichaean teaching was inconsistent even with his own knowledge of solstice and equinox, and eclipses of the sun and moon He read Aristotle's *Physics* for light ; this book showed him even more clearly the weakness of the Manichaeans No believer in Carthage was able to silence his doubts , all said : " wait till the great Faustus comes from Rome ! " The great Faustus came , but here he was as powerless as the rest. Moreover, he was honest enough to confess as much to Augustine in private.

Augustine was now adrift again The Manichaeans could tell him no more than his own nature told him—that in man, as in Nature, there is a perpetual struggle between good and evil His few months in Rome brought him no light , but at Milan he gradually fell under the influence of the Bishop, St Ambrose, a man some fifteen years older than himself, of noble birth, well versed in Greek theology, and of great eloquence But it was Ambrose's character rather than his intellect which dominated Augustine He was a Roman of noble birth and truly Roman qualities, who brought to the building-up of a spiritual Church all the virtues which his ancestors would have devoted to the earthly State, Republic or Empire. His father had been Praetorian Prefect of Gaul, a province which included Britain and Spain He himself, at the age of 34, became *Consularis*, or Governor, of an important province in Northern Italy, with Milan for its capital Suddenly, against his will, and before he had ever been baptized, he was elected Bishop by the unanimous call of the people. He accepted reluctantly but then, throughout the rest of his life, he did more than the three energetic

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Popes, his contemporaries, to organize the Church so as to outlast those barbarian invasions which all thoughtful men now foresaw. He was learned and eloquent, but there was a power within him and behind him beyond learning and eloquence. He was the first churchman, the first of a memorable series, who brought an Emperor to his knees.

In 390, Theodosius I committed a great crime and a great blunder. Instead of trying and condemning those who had murdered his military governor at Thessalonica, he slaughtered in reprisal 7,000 or more of the citizens, the deed was done treacherously and in cold blood, without distinction of age or sex. Ambrose refused to admit Theodosius to worship in the church at Milan until he had done public penance. It is true that Ambrose once took the same haughty line, and with the same success, in defence of injustice. He interfered to prevent the punishment of a populace which had destroyed Jewish and heretical conventicles, and the bishop who had connived at this outrage. But this is only to say that, here, he was no better than his contemporaries. Where he differed from his contemporaries was in the case of Thessalonica. What had not been seen before in Roman history, and what even a man like Ambrose could only have done with the best civic feeling organized at his back, was this public humiliation of the ruler of the world in the name of plain justice. It was the Church, through Ambrose, that won, and the Church won because it was, with all its faults, the most compact union ever yet seen in the world of men whose ideals were not only professedly higher, but on the whole actually higher, than those of their neighbours. Thus we have here Horace's *justum et tenacem propositi virum*

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no longer single, no longer passive, but organized in active masses. So that we need no longer say with Horace: "Even though the world fall to pieces around, the ruins will crush without daunting him." Henceforward the righteous man can never find himself alone: he is a single leaf on a growing and living tree. Here, then, is a strong seed which has already struck deep root amid the loosening stones of the ancient world; which will strike deeper with all its multitudinous fibres, and feed its own great future upon the disintegration of the past. St Augustine's *Confessions* show, incidentally, an admirable portrait of this man. Ambrose was never idle, yet never in a hurry. He did not relieve Augustine's difficulties by direct explanation, but by his insistence upon the spiritual rather than the literal interpretation of the Bible. Yet, even here, he helped rather by what he was than by what he said. He was most imposing of all as a representative of the *majestas* of the Church; just as, in earlier life, he had represented the *majestas* of the Empire. He was a man who, above all others, saw clearly what course he wanted to pursue, and pursued that course unflinchingly. Augustine, on the contrary, was overwhelmed by the consciousness of his own uncertainties and inconsistencies. In him we see a young man of brilliant promise, but, as yet, of no equivalent performance. "unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." It was Ambrose, and his own anxious meditations, that finally crystallized his purpose. Like Matthew Arnold's Scholar Gypsy, he "waited for the spark from heaven to fall." Once, by chance, the words *Take and read!* fell upon his ear from an unknown voice hard by. He seized a Bible and opened it by chance at Romans xiii. 13. "Let us walk honestly, as in the day, not in rioting

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and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." He submitted to baptism by Ambrose, and was thenceforward the greatest Christian champion in the Western Church

This life-story is significant for that whole age · for it exemplifies the inextinguishable human instinct to find order amid the real or apparent disorder of the universe After all, we have only one life to spend here, shortening day by day, and the worst choice of all is that of never choosing at all We know that we cannot choose absolutely right, that changes will certainly come even in the next generation To some extent we may be able to anticipate that new verdict, yet we can no more anticipate it exactly than we can jump away from our own shadow. This may not always have been the conscious reflection of such a generation as Augustine's, but some such reasoning must have worked sub-consciously in those men; while to us it is their natural justification No careful, balanced, unenthusiastic system of philosophy could have lived through the centuries of brute force and constant warfare that were coming, except, perhaps, here and there in holes and corners Society needed a creed which strong-willed men could not only commend, but fall in love with, devoting themselves to it, sacrificing themselves to it, propagating and perpetuating it from generation to generation by the intensity and magnetic force of their conviction. A creed of that kind, in an age of that kind, must necessarily cast overboard, abandon to others, much that was subtlest and most suggestive in ancient thought. much that would necessarily crop up again in the later Middle

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Ages, when the growing orderliness of society made calmer and more objective reflection possible · thought whose resurrection would finally destroy the peculiarly medieval view of life. At such a supreme crisis of the struggle for existence as we see in the fifth century, the organs that perish and the functions that are suspended are those organs and functions which are least necessary for bare survival. It must be repeated here, the fundamental superiority of character to pure intellect is that which explains the irresistible transition from Ancient to Medieval Thought. The decaying Empire lost sadly in knowledge, but it gained in concentration and moral earnestness.

Here, then, in this converted Manichee and this reformed concubinary, is the man with whom, in a very real sense, we may say that medieval thought begins and ends. For his ideas constantly crop up in the scholastics, and had immense influence over medieval political theory. On the other hand, it was the rediscovery of Augustine and of the Bible which formed the doctrinal basis of the Reformation. Not, of course, that men had forgotten either the one or the other, but that, about the beginning of the sixteenth century, they began to read both with other eyes and with a change of emphasis which became absolutely revolutionary.

When we say, "his ideas," this is not to claim absolute originality for any one of them. He had assimilated them from Plato and Aristotle, the Stoics and the early Greek Fathers, but he had made them into flesh and blood for himself.

What was it, then, that gave St. Augustine this enormous influence? Partly his strength, partly his weakness. For his strength, he is one of the most human and

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veracious of all writers in all literatures. To almost all that he wrote we may apply what Carlyle says of Dante's *Commedia* "This is essentially a veracious book." Or, again, what Carlyle was so fond of quoting from the Hindoo mystic : "I have fire enough in my belly to burn up all the sins of the world." His veracity and his fire were, to begin with, a compelling force. But his weakness was the counterpart of his strength. He is so intensely personal that his philosophy reflects the contradictions of his human nature. Yet those very contradictions attracted thinkers. In him, as in the Bible, each may find something in favour of his own particular theory. Luther almost deified him, and he fascinated Cardinal Newman. His standpoint is that which he himself describes "Deum et animam scire cupio" "Nihilne plus?" "Nihil omnino"<sup>1</sup> In other words, we can attain to a firm grasp of the highest questions of all, only through the earnest and unceasing study of our own mind, in its relation to the highest truth which we can discover outside ourselves. And here he judged rightly. He who truly knows himself knows others; he who truly recounts his own experiences and convictions carries others with him. It is the half-real that fails. The truest man, whether he labels himself religious or not, is the man who is bent on facing as squarely as he can the facts of his own nature, and the facts of those much greater realities that lie outside and above human nature. There are no qualities more certain to command success in any sphere than resolution and concentration. But, in their highest forms, these are among the rarest of virtues. Few men have self-control enough to devote

<sup>1</sup> *Soliloq.* 1. 6 "I long to know God and mine own soul" "Nothing more?" "Nothing whatever".

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their lives to one object, fewer still to a purely charitable and disinterested object. The problem of God and our soul—put it in what words you will, call it the Riddle of Life—is put before us all; and we all play with the fringe of it at least. Few care to spend the greater part of their lives over it; fewer still, their whole lives and their whole energies. Those few, whatever divergent answers they may seem to have found, stand head and shoulders not only above ordinary humanity, but above all but the very greatest. Therefore the key to Augustine's strength lies in that motto—"Deum et animam scire cupio." It was not merely a problem to him, it was his life, it was himself. To put it into one bald technical word, he is among the most *subjective* of great writers.

But, while this explains his power, it also indicates his serious limitations. "Augustine sketched," says Harnack, "innumerable schemes in theology, but created no dogmatic formulas. His was too rich, serious, and truthful a nature to distribute catchwords." Subjective truth was his lodestar. Truth in so far as his own pair of eyes can manage to focus it! Wherever the image becomes too dim in his own mind, there his instinct is to break off; to leave the problem unsolved.

This, after all, in extreme cases, is the refuge of the most consistent philosophers. Kant himself leaves Free Will very much where Dr Johnson placed it. "All logic is against it, and all experience speaks for it." Very seldom does Augustine pursue a question beyond his own depth. The two most striking instances are where practical questions compelled him to make up a mind which might otherwise have halted for ever between opposite theories. Against the Donatists—a heresy which amounted to actual civil war—he tried, not always

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successfully, to formulate a clear conception of the Catholic Church. Against Pelagius, again, he thought out a theory of Predestination which has, perhaps, given birth to as much controversy as it was designed to obviate.

St. Augustine's fire, then, and his frank subjectiveness, go far to explain why he dominated the whole Middle Ages. On the one hand, his vivid flame kindled all minds; on the other, all schools of thought found in him something to suit them. Moreover, his very shortcomings stimulated thought. Those were often due to his Dualism, the relics of his Manichaean training. True, he abjured it in the form of a struggle between two co-ordinate powers, but he kept it in the Pauline sense of a divided will within the man himself. Of this, his whole life-experience makes him keenly conscious. Moreover, he often follows it also in a further extended sense, in that of a fight of Spirit against Matter. We shall see in the next chapter how this Dualism comes out in his conception of Church and State. Meanwhile, let us consider how certain philosophical and theological doctrines were forced upon him by practical experience, by the contemplation of God and his own soul.

First, his famous doctrine of Grace. This, as will be seen, involves what has always been the root-problem of theology, Free Will, and is, therefore, under quite different names, a burning question of to-day. How far are we free agents? How far are we guided and moulded by our environment? The saint himself was emphatically a brand plucked from the burning. He might have chosen for his autobiography the title which Bunyan chose for his own: *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. Grace had saved him: that was the thing most obvious,



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most ineffaceable, in the story of God and his soul. *Gratia Gratis Data*—while he wandered waywardly, at every step it had dogged him. Francis Thompson's *Hound of Heaven* is just a fine piece of embroidery on this theme. At every step, he had found himself shepherded towards the fold. At every step, conscience had broken down his original resistances, here, again, Newman's *Apologia* repeats the story in a modern form. Thus this conviction crystallized, in his controversy with Pelagius, into a scheme of salvation. All comes from God, none from man. Grace is Beginning and Middle and End. It is *praeveniens* and *cooperans* and *irresistibilis*.

But there are three great difficulties. In the first place, does not this doctrine make good works superfluous? In strict logic, yes, but here Augustine, though his logical arguments against the objector are weak, is saved by his subjectivity. The objection, in fact, is not one which will be seriously pressed by a man who wants to know the truth about God and his soul—about human nature and the force or the forces which control human nature. St. Paul answered it by anticipation. "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid, we that are dead to sin, how shall we continue any longer therein?"

No sincerely religious soul could possibly, in cold blood, take advantage of God's goodness to hug himself in evil-doing.

But, secondly, does it not raise the whole question of Free Will, most difficult and insoluble of philosophical problems? If God's Grace is first and last, if it not only anticipates the man's thoughts and words and deeds, but also controls them irresistibly—*praeveniens*, *irresistibilis*—in what sense can he possibly be thought of as a free

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agent ? Augustine recognizes the difficulty, and tries to make room for it. Man has free will, but only to do evil ; this explains the existence of sin. The Pauline doctrine of predestination is strongly emphasized. Through Adam's fall his whole posterity have forfeited God's favour. The unbaptized are doomed to hell ; and St. Augustine contemplates even physical pain to all eternity for good pagans and the unbaptized children of pious parents. But God chooses some whom He will save from the consequences of original sin, or rather, has chosen them from all eternity : for it is part of this doctrine that for God there is no time, past, present, and future are simultaneous. It will be seen how easily such a doctrine lent itself to those interminable discussions upon Grace which, even as late as the end of the seventeenth century, gave rise to some of the bitterest doctrinal conflicts both within and without the Roman Church.

The third difficulty concerns the very conception of a Church, but this is so important that we must reserve it for a separate chapter.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CITY OF GOD

AUGUSTINE's philosophy, then, was strongly subjective, and his own subjective experience had forced upon him two cardinal conceptions. First, that no good can be done but through God's Grace, freely given to the elect—*Gratia Gratis Data*. There was the power outside himself, which had proved irresistible, there was Predestination. On the other hand, how could he forget the Church, to which his personal debt had been so enormous? That Spiritual Society so admirably impersonated by St. Ambrose at Milan, which was taking more and more frankly a visible and tangible shape, borrowing more and more definitely the organization of the decaying Roman Empire? The two ideas, Free Grace and Church control, under close analysis, are not easy to reconcile. But the greatest and most passionate minds—those that leave the deepest mark on later thought—are often those who are so possessed with two different sides of human experience that each hardly leaves room for the other.

On the face of it, just as this *Gratia praeveniens, co-operans, irresistibilis* seems to render Free Will impossible, so it would seem to render the Church superfluous. If God's Grace comes upon us and leads us irresistibly to good, what need is there of any co-worker in this

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scheme ? The Almighty has decreed ; how can anything affect that decree ? For we are not concerned here with any question of degree. To Augustine, as to practically all medieval thinkers, Heaven and Hell stood out in absolutely unrelieved contrast. The alternative was between black and white ; an eternity of unspeakable bliss or of unimaginable horror. Not even the later developments of the doctrine of Purgatory as a middle state could soften that contrast to the thinking mind. Purgatory may last for thousands of years , but in the end comes the inexorable decision - eternal bliss for the Predestinate, eternal torture for the rest, according to God's irresistible Grace. It is through the Church, says Augustine, that Grace co-operates with God. But co-operation means work in common, each party assisting the other. How can any society of men assist a work which was preordained from all eternity, and which its most energetic efforts could not alter, to all appearance ?

Here, again, the saint's logic would seem to break down, and he is left to passionate religious emotion. The Church must come into this scheme , the alternative is unthinkable. Therefore, as an afterthought, we must explain its function by inserting that word *cooperans*. His intense subjectivity comes here into play , his doctrine is here controlled not so much by discursive thought as by his own unforgettable personal experience. We may see this in the very vagueness with which he conceives this fundamental and all-important idea of *Church*, and in his unconscious transitions from one conception to another, according to the exigencies of his argument. Sometimes the Church is *Corpus Verum Christi*, the body of God's Elect (necessarily including

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some who have not yet been converted). Sometimes, again, she is *Corpus Permixtum*, all who worship God in Christ, and, therefore, a multitude in which no man can be certain of his own or other's salvation, the only certainty is that it must necessarily be mixed, including some who are destined to fall. Or, thirdly, she is the *Externa Societas Sacramentorum*. all present conformists, including the merest time-servers or hypocrites, so long as they are baptized and communicants. Or, putting it more simply, we may distinguish between the first of this trio and the other two. Augustine thinks sometimes of the Invisible Church, sometimes of the Visible, and with fatal confusions for his arguments. In the one case we are to think of a society perfect and celestial, yet God alone knows who are the chartered freemen of this New Jerusalem. In the other case, everybody sees who are the Churchmen, but God alone knows which of them is his, which is the Devil's.

But this idealization of the real is natural, one might almost say inevitable, to a man of Augustine's personal experience. Grace, the Hound of Heaven, was also the sleuth-hound of the Church. How could the Scheme of Salvation ignore that society, which Augustine had seen so weightily impersonated by Ambrose at Milan, and which was taking more and more frankly a tangible and compelling shape, borrowing more and more definitely the *majestas* of the now waning Roman Empire? If the theologian's subjectivity weighs so heavily here against his logic, cannot we justify this by some of the highest human instincts? First, gratitude to the Church through which he had imbibed that Grace. Secondly, Charity in the widest sense, to use a cold word—Altruism. The social instinct is one of the

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greatest factors in human progress ; and no historian can doubt that the Church of that day, with all her shortcomings, was the greatest then existing society of idealists in the Western World.

Thus, for all practical purposes, Augustine was right, and the logical flaw must not be crudely emphasized. If, in this world, I can live apart from other people, then of course I need no Church, nor any society whatever. But the prairie-value of even the strongest man, physically and intellectually, is negligible. We are nothing without our fellows ; and a man's true individuality can develop only with the help of what society gives him. Therefore this *Gratia Gratis Data* will naturally work upon the elect through the society of the elect—the *Corpus Verum Christi*. Augustine's mistake was that of attempting closer definition than this, in his mortal struggle with the Donatists. So long as we keep the question in terms applicable to any pure and idealist society, there is no fault to find. For in his time, and for centuries to come, the Church answered the requirements of his philosophy.

Yet the logical flaw is there , and it will come out when men try to reduce logic to practice. Augustine's confusion between different conceptions is most fatal in the cases where he deals with the question of State legislation for the Church. Rights which may be granted to the *Corpus Verum* are claimed for the *Corpus Permixtum*. In one place, he feels it natural that State should legislate for churchmen. In other places, he argues that in all religious matters the State must accept Church legislation. Although he was long opposed to physical coercion for heretics, his personal experiences with the Donatists changed his mind, and he published a formal retraction.

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Indeed, even the Inquisition is there in germ, as in the interpretation which he gave of Christ's parable in Luke xiv 23. The reader who may be curious to follow this further should turn to Pierre Bayle's dissertation headed *Contrains-les d'Entrer*

Here, as elsewhere, he started movements beyond his own control. Yet in practice, it must be repeated, he usually drew the line admirably. It is quite possible that, as he asserted, the Donatists had been the first to appeal to physical force. But, to come back to our starting-point, much of the man's greatness lay in his truth to his own conscience. He made sure that tradition should receive its full weight, after that, he sought fearlessly for himself, and this sincerity, joined with his extraordinary psychological penetration, kept him from outrageous exaggerations.

At the end of his life, practical questions made still greater demands upon his thought, and called from him what may perhaps be called the earliest existing attempt at a Philosophy of History.

In 410, Alaric's sack of Rome shocked the Western World. St Jerome confessed himself utterly unnerved by the catastrophe, even away in remote Bethlehem where his life was safe, but where his studies were interrupted by refugees reduced from the highest rank and affluence to beggary. St Augustine, in his bishopric of Hippo on the African coast of the Mediterranean, was then more than 56 years old. He saw the world waiting for some inspired voice, and he addressed himself to the task. Three years later, he began his work on *The City of God*, and worked at it until 426, within four years of his death. All that time the clouds had been darkening, in 430 Hippo itself was attacked by Gaiseric, a far worse

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barbarian conqueror than Alaric, and Augustine died during the siege.

Before the book was finished, Christianity had completed its first century of superiority in the Roman Empire. It was now the party in power, and we all know how much harder it is for the party in power to live up to its ideal principles than for the party in opposition. Christians, now that they were not only secure but privileged, had shown intolerance both to pagans and to heretics. And, even at its best, Christianity had naturally disappointed that very numerous class of persons who assume that their own vocation is to take life easily, while the vocation of others is to make life smoother and more orderly for them.

Hence the persistent belief that Christianity had been preordained to outlast the Crucifixion by only as long as there are days in the year. This would bring the world to A.D. 398, and Alaric was by that time started on his career of conquest and ravage. Therefore the first part of St. Augustine's book is necessarily controversial. To use his own words

"The first five [of the books into which it is divided] refute those who fancy that polytheistic worship is necessary in order to secure worldly prosperity, and that all these overwhelming calamities have befallen us in consequence of its prohibition. In the following five books I address myself to those who admit that such calamities have at all times attended, and will at all times attend, the human race, and that they constantly recur in forms more or less disastrous, varying only in the scenes, occasions, and persons on whom they light, but who, while admitting this, maintain that the worship of the gods is advantageous for the life to come. In these ten books, then, I refute these two opinions, which are as groundless as they are antagonistic to the Christian religion."

In those ten books he shows, first, how completely



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the critics have lost their sense of historical proportion. Rome had indeed flourished for 1,100 years, yet the Assyrian Empire had lasted 1,200. Secondly, her own civil wars had constantly drenched her in blood. Thirdly, she had suffered not infrequent defeats from foreign foes: the Gauls had been more destructive than the Goths. Thence, fourthly, he enters upon a criticism of the character and worship of the old Roman gods, in which he shows remarkable satirical powers.

In the remaining twelve books he passes from destructive to constructive arguments. He draws, point by point, the contrast between the State, the City of Man, and the Church, as City of God. City, in each case, has the antique sense of a capital with its surrounding territory. He leads off with a description of the origins of human society, as suggested by the first few chapters of the Bible, and notably by Genesis iv, which he interprets after the methods then generally accepted, and from which he draws conclusions that remained practically unquestioned for centuries. This contrast between earthly and heavenly city dates from the first beginnings of the human family, from the first few years after Adam and Eve had been driven from Paradise. The founder of the earthly city was Cam, for this he quotes Genesis iv 17, "and he builded a city" *ædificavit civitatem*, and so on, with characteristic mystical interpretations of the Bible story. The founder of the heavenly city was Seth, Cam's younger brother, for this he gives equally characteristic mystical reasons (Bk. xv., ch 17, 18). But what concerns the modern reader is less the theological argument than the practical conclusion, the touches by which Augustine heightens the contrast between a State busy with earthly things,

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and a Church busy with heavenly things. In Paradise (he argued) there was neither private property nor government—*i.e.* statecraft. Neither was needed, property and police were consequences of the Fall of Man, these are symptoms not of man's civilization but of his corruption. Cain, who founded the first human city, was also the first murderer: he slew his brother Abel. Romulus, who founded the mighty Roman Empire, greatest of all, was also the murderer of his brother Remus. The Earthly State, therefore, bears an ineradicable stain of blood, from the moment of its first foundation down to these later times, when Rome had dipped her hands in the blood of the Christian martyrs. These things are implicit in the very idea of an earthly State. Such persecutions are typical of the warfare that always must exist between the Earthly and Heavenly Cities. Neither can get away from the other nor fully agree with the other. For the Earthly City and the Heavenly City are bound together by all human ties, and will remain so bound until the end of time. Good and bad must grow together in the world till the Day of Judgment. We know in human nature that a bad man and a bad man will be sure to disagree, again, that a bad man and a good man must needs disagree, so that we never get real peace but between wholly good men, and such exclusive consistent goodness can never be found in our present life—human society is always mixed. Therefore the persecution of Christians by the Roman Government was not only natural, but inevitable.

Yet, however much Augustine might be tempted to emphasize the faults of the State, and the virtues of the Church, he was quite guiltless of the worst exaggerations which were destined to be drawn from his doctrines in

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the later Middle Ages. For he could not help recognizing fully the greatness of the Roman Empire. He had been steeped in Roman literature, his early devotion to Virgil struggled in later years with his fiery, overmastering religious enthusiasm. The Roman Empire, with all its imperfections, had been a preordained preparation for Christ's Empire. In the first place, Christ had been born under the first Roman Emperor. Again, that victory of Rome over other nations, during all these centuries of heathenism, had been providentially ordained to prepare the world for greater things. Her victories constituted a survival of the fittest. And her ancient philosophers, with all their differences of opinion, had helped to build the necessary foundation for a systematic Christian creed. For Augustine's age was one of rapid crystallization for Christian dogma. Moreover, not only did he contend that the State had thus been a real and necessary factor in human progress since the Fall, as preparing the way for the Church, but he recognized also, generally, that the State, within its own earthly province, must control the Church. Through looking upon property and police as a consequence of Adam's fall, he yet felt strongly that for fallen man (i.e. for human society as it will be to the end of the world) property and police will be necessary in one form or another. And, as a consequence, that these and similar things come definitely within the province of the State. The Church, therefore, must render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. The City of God, being inextricably mixed up with the State—the Churchman being a citizen quite as really as he is a Churchman—therefore the City of God must obey the laws which are promulgated by the Earthly City. This is a doctrine which he only once seems to forget in

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all his works. For, in thus abandoning all claim for the Church to command or even to rival the State in worldly affairs, Augustine would not have thought he was lowering, but exalting, the true ecclesiastical ideal. The greatest and most abiding things, he held, are those which are least visible, least tangible. True, Christianity had grown up under shadow of worldly Rome. It had suffered long and bitter persecution from Rome. But it was destined to outlive Rome, because it did not rest upon perishable earthly power. It could stoop to conquer. Precisely because, whenever and wherever the inevitable struggle came, it was the Church's duty to suffer persecution rather than to inflict persecution—and Augustine was here untrue to himself only in that extreme case of the Donatists—precisely for that reason, the Church was a stronger State, a more permanent State, than the Empire. On this point, much as we may regret Augustine's final change and retraction, we must give him full credit for his earlier liberality. Therefore, if the end of earthly Rome has indeed come, as Alaric's sack of the city seems to show—if the reign of the Gothic conqueror is inevitable—yet the new barbarian is as powerless as old Rome had been against the soul. The man who can maintain his faith in the future may march confidently forward, and the Church, which is a society of such believers in the future, may herself, as a body, march forward confidently and unswervingly towards the Sabbath Rest which remaineth for the People of God. Such is Augustine's conclusion, in the words of the Epistle to the Hebrews. This book, then, is the first attempt in the world's history to formulate a philosophy of history, some ruling principle which may guide us through all the changes and chances of the human race.

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In a brief summary like this, its imperfections must necessarily come out more strongly than its excellences. But let us for one moment try to get behind mere words—behind transient fashions of thought which have necessarily changed in all these fifteen centuries—and to look straight into the kernel of Augustine's theory. Is not this his root idea, that, while all human institutions are necessarily provisional, all right thought is imperishable? And (another side of the same idea) that, the more loyally the thinking man obeys the State in most cases, the higher he may rise in thought above all that is merely transitory in the State? Rendering unto Cæsar for the sake of peace and order, but not fearing ever to face or, if need be, to champion the truth. And, through all apparent failures, marching on in the steady conviction that, if his ideal is indeed true, then this must be the force of the future, the winning force in the long run. That was the idea which possessed Augustine, and which he clothed in ideas and phrases necessarily conditioned by the mental atmosphere of his century. And that has been the root idea of every true pioneer of humanity, down through the centuries to a Tolstoy in our own day. All this, the Christian of the Middle Ages could feel within the four walls of his church. There, before the altar of Him whose crucifixion had been the beginning of His real reign over the Western World, His followers could feel that their souls were really their own, and that the horrors of this barbarous world were not destined to overwhelm them altogether. They could conceive a red thread of God's providence running through history, and believe that all was done for what Lessing has called the Education of the Human Race. The cruel material world threw them back upon the more real world

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within themselves. Over and over again, in those early centuries, we see the difficulties which these new conquerors had with the Church. The fall of Gaiseric's great Vandal kingdom was certainly hastened by the fact that he made the Church his enemy. So was it also with Odovakar, though here the Church had less excuse for enmity, and so was it even with Theodoric. Among the organizations which have survived these invasions, the Church is certainly the strongest. None of the new kingdoms will endure, until at last comes one nation, the Frankish, which knows how to make friends with the Church, that is, a nation which is not Arian, but orthodox. What then are the ideals of this Church, with which the barbarians must make friends if they wish to succeed? How did men in the fifth and sixth centuries conceive this Church? The whole medieval conception, and much even of the modern, rests on St. Augustine's *City of God*. Here, more almost than anywhere else, we see the truth of these few sentences in which Professor Gilson characterizes the earlier centuries in which Christianity was struggling to formulate and fix its own dogmas (p. 4). Augustine's work, he writes, "already penetrates deeply into the faith [of the Church], and its contents are destined to exert decisive influence upon the future of philosophical speculation. The most evident result of the work pursued by the Fathers of the Church is this—that, for the medieval thinker, Catholic dogma and the essential formulas which have begun to fix and define it, constituted already a datum, a truth, which affirms and justifies itself by its own methods, and in face of which every individual reason must bow."

## CHAPTER IV

### BOETHIUS TO GREGORY THE GREAT

IN the four centuries between Augustine and Charles the Great only three names are worth mentioning in a brief sketch of this kind—Boethius, Cassiodorus, and Isidore of Seville with Pope Gregory I.

Boethius (480 to 525) was a man of noble birth who rose to great eminence in political life. From his first book, the *Arithmetic*, which he wrote at the age of twenty, and which was a free translation from the Greek, he passed through similar manuals upon music and geometry to the far more ambitious theme of Greek philosophy. Here his ambition was to translate, with notes, the whole of Aristotle and the whole of Plato, and to reconcile their philosophical systems. In fact, he did no more than to translate the whole of Aristotle's *Organon*, that is, his logical treatises. To this he added Porphyry's *Isagoge* (that is, his introduction to the *Categories*). A good deal of this, however, was forgotten in later centuries. All this work Boethius did in the intervals of heavy and exacting State work (for he rose to the Consulship before he was 30 years old) and in a very brief span of life. For, though his Christianity was certainly not of any narrow or predominantly aggressive character, he died as victim, to some extent at least, of a great religious quarrel. Theodoric the Ostrogoth was reigning at

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Ravenna over what was left of the Roman Empire in the west ; and Theodoric, like nearly all the Gothic warriors, was an Arian heretic. He favoured religious peace, for the Arian, unembarrassed by anything so difficult as the dogma of the Trinity, could afford to ignore or laugh at those who believed more than he himself did. The Catholic, on the other hand, was morally bound to oppose a creed which denied that which to him seemed essential to Christianity. Finally, therefore, the peace was broken from the Catholic side. The Greek Emperor Justin, a soldier of fortune, together with his nephew and successor, Justinian, began to bid for the unanimous support of the whole Christian Church, West as well as East, not only from religious conviction, but from policy. They did in fact succeed in healing a schism between the Bishops of Constantinople and Rome. And now Emperors, in concert with Pope Hormisdas, began to fulminate against the heretics—among others, against the Arians.

In 523 they began to take away the Arian church buildings and to force conversions. Then Theodoric retaliated, and with bitterness. He himself had long ago decreed for his own kingdom “We cannot command any religion upon our people ; for no man can be forced to believe against his convictions.” Now, therefore, he commanded the new Pope (John I, 523–26) to go with four other ambassadors to Constantinople and obtain the cessation of this persecution. The embassy not succeeding as he wished, he cast the envoys into prison, where John died. It was shortly before this Pope’s death that Theodoric executed our Boethius and his father-in-law Symmachus for suspected complicity in a plot with the Emperor against himself. There was



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probably some truth in the accusation against Boethius. Yet even so, the death of Boethius was a grievous blunder, and that of Symmachus was a crime to boot. Those two executions, together with the Pope's death in prison, alienated Catholics for ever from Theodoric's rule. Two generations afterwards, Pope Gregory the Great recorded the orthodox feeling in his *Dialogues*, one of the favourite books of the Middle Ages. He told how a noble Roman had touched at Lipari Islands, where a hermit told him "King Theodoric the Arian is dead, for yesterday about noontide I saw him led by his victims Pope John and Symmachus, barefooted and disrobed, and then cast into the cauldron of this volcano hard by." The Roman noted the day and hour, and found on his return that it was even as the hermit had told him. Volcanoes, of course, passed in the Middle Ages as the mouths of hell. Boethius, then, was cut off in the fulness of his powers, but not before his courage and his patient energy had set their stamp upon European civilization. All of his work showed the same preoccupation—that of making Greek Literature accessible to the dying world of Rome and the recent world of the barbarian conqueror. It was naive in its limitations, for instance, in his proposal not only to translate all these books, but to reconcile the two philosophical systems, yet all was instinct with the true scholar's spirit. We have here the last flicker of the genuine classical flame.

He appears best of all in his *Consolation of Philosophy*, written in prison. The influence of that book was as long-lived as that of St. Augustine, although neither so wide nor so deep. Our King Alfred translated the *Consolation*; so did Chaucer, so did Jean de Meun, famous for his share in the *Roman de la Rose*, and so, later on, did

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Queen Elizabeth. Dante was penetrated with it. We see this in the episode of Paolo and Francesca, where the latter quotes directly from Boethius. "There is no greater grief than to recall our happy days amid our days of misery." So again with the final sentence of the *Paradiso*. "The love that moves the sun and all the stars." So again when Milton wrote concerning fame: "That last infirmity of noble mind," and when Hamlet said. "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." For this influence of the *Consolation* the reasons were very much the same as in St. Augustine's case—first, the extent to which both of them reproduced the classics, especially Plato, and, secondly, their personal sincerity.

As to the classics, Boethius is the great compendiator through whom Greek philosophy survived the Dark Ages. Nobody has written half so well of him in English as the late W. P. Ker, who commends in one memorable sentence "his fidelity to Plato, and his subservience to an old Greek fashion of thought in times when clearness and simplicity were more and more difficult every day" (*Dark Ages*, p. 117). Boethius did that work so well that there was little room for any other of the kind. He launched just the lifeboat that could be set afloat in that tempest of the world, and he sent off in that boat, down to the firm land of the new world of the Middle Ages, just so much as it could contain of the cargo from the great ship of Greek philosophy.

As for sincerity, there he gave the greatest proof that a man could give. He wrote in prison, waiting daily for the end, and, thus preparing himself to face death, he taught posterity to face life and death. The book is not one of formal philosophy, there are scarcely any

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philosophical technicalities from beginning to end. It is a treatise of practical philosophy, written by a man steeped in Plato and Aristotle. Boethius gives us the directest application of these philosophies to the problems of daily life. He is concerned with nothing more. Everything that is merely academic falls away. What appealed to Boethius was what he could carry with him after death, what he could carry with him into eternity, and that it is which has given eternity to his book. There is surprisingly little in it that could be called distinctively Christian. In fact, doubts were primarily cast upon his actual Christianity, until the discovery in modern times of Cassiodorus's evidence that he had written a book on the Trinity. The fact is that Boethius, writing his *Consolation*, stayed on ground common to all honest men, Christian or non-Christian, who are trying to face the truth. He wrote concerning the old commonplaces of Death and Time in "a spirit of freedom and courage, unlike the freedom and courage of the northern fighting temper, and not wholly Christian either, not Christian at all in any confessed or open manner, but as indomitable in its own way as the northern gods, and as quiet as the first of the Christian martyrs" (Ker, p. 104.)

Boethius's contemporary, Cassiodorus, was Secretary of State to Theodoric, and his *Letters* are one of our most valuable sources for the history of that period. At the age of 60 and more, he retired to his little native town of Squillace in S Italy, and founded a monastery hard by at Vivaria, "the home of Fishponds," in 540. Here, for twenty-three years, he fought a hard uphill fight for education, not only in word but in example. For his monks he compiled a series of handbooks, not remarkable in themselves, but useful in preserving much of the old Roman

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culture He "sought to rescue for the Church the ruins of ancient learning." His *Tripartite Church History*, compiled from the three chief Greek historians, stood beside Rufinus's translation of Eusebius as the main source of whatever the medieval clergy knew on that subject, and the careful copies of Jerome's Vulgate Bible which he prepared formed the basis of future textual correction.

The chief compendiator, however, was Isidore, Archbishop of Seville ([570]-636). He was the most learned man of his time in the Western Church, and left behind him an encyclopædic collection of writings. Whereas Boethius had seized the true spirit of the ancients, Isidore is capable of following only the letter, and often the letter at its worst. Yet, even so, posterity owes a heavy debt to him, for he has collected a mass of fragments which, however ill-chosen and ill-arranged, would otherwise have perished. It still happens, here and there, that some modern student succeeds in unearthing from his pages some fresh quotation from a Latin classic. His most directly valuable book, perhaps, is the *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis*, which testifies to the liturgical practices of his time. But the most ambitious, and most famous in the Middle Ages, was his *Twenty Books of Etymologies*, which in one sense was the first attempt of the Dark Ages to produce an Encyclopædia. Almost all subjects are included. To take the first ten by way of example, they treat of Grammar, Rhetoric, Dialectics, Mathematics, Medicine, Law, the Calendar, Ecclesiastical Books and Offices, God and His Angels, the Church, Tongues, Nations, and Realms, and an Alphabetical Etymology. This last subject, however, pervades the whole Encyclopædia and determined its title.

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Everywhere Isidore tries to draw scientific deductions from the derivations of the actual words, and more often than not these are ludicrously wrong. Yet the book, even in its faults, was what the age wanted, Isidore is an admirable barometer. The excruciating derivations which *The Golden Legend* generally prefixes to each saint's life are either taken or imitated from him. Hrabanus Maurus, the great Encyclopædist of the ninth century, founded his *De Universo* upon Isidore's *Etymologies*.

This life-struggle of the old learning against the new barbarism is still further exemplified in Gregory the Great ([544]-604). Aristotle emphasizes the indestructibility of man's appetite for knowledge "It is a thing" (he writes) "which all human beings naturally desire." But to realize the full truth of this we must go among the very poor, and see how gladly they catch at anything sufficiently simple and human to come really within their mental grasp. So also in history we see it best in the tenacity with which Europe clung to fragments of ancient learning all through the worst days of the barbarian invasions, in face of fightings without and fears within. For, all through those days of war and famine, the most learned men, being Churchmen, were professionally bound to regard pagan literature with anything but undivided admiration and affection. The earliest and most zealous Christians had been tempted to complete and deliberate obscurantism. For, as Dr Poole rightly says, Tertullian's "the patriarchs of the heretics are the ancient philosophers" expressed only half the truth. Elsewhere he wrote, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem, the Academy with the Church? . . . When we believe [in Christ] we desire to believe in nothing

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else ; for the first clause of our belief is this, that there is nothing further which we need believe." Even Augustine, in his *Confessions*, shudders at the snares that may lurk in a pagan poet, such as that Virgil whom he had once loved so well (I 13). Still plainer are the words of Gregory the Great in the Introductory Epistle to his *Moralia in Job* " I take no pains to avoid the confusion of barbarisms, I contemn to keep inflections and conjugations and the cases proper to different prepositions, for I deem it utterly unworthy to restrict the words of the Oracles of God by the rules of the grammarian." Yet even Oracles of God are not fully comprehensible without some attention to the rules of the grammarians Therefore some excuse must be sought for keeping up the classics, even under protest , and this was found, characteristically, in the allegorical explanation of a Bible text The discoverer was Origen, most learned and ingenious of the Fathers. Moses, in Deuteronomy (xxi 11), warns the Hebrews against intermarriage with captive Midianites but he makes an exception If the captor is bent upon this union, he may contract it under proper precautions " Then thou shalt bring her home to thine house ; and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails , and she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month , and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife " Thus it is with heathen learning ; let us reject the dross, and use the pure gold for our sanctuary The idea was caught up a century later by Jerome, most learned of the Latin Fathers , and thenceforward it echoed down the Middle Ages, side by side with the equally pertinent precedent of spoiling the Egyptians

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when the Chosen People set out for the Promised Land. So Hrabanus Maurus wrote : " The Philosophers, especially the Platonists, if they have spoken truths accordant to our faith, are not to be shunned, but their truths should be appropriated, as from unjust possessors."

But the poets were more dangerous, and here St Gregory was unyielding. He wrote to Didier, Bishop of Vienne " A report has reached us which we cannot mention without a blush, that thou expoundest grammar to certain friends. Our former opinion of thee is turned into mourning and sorrow. The same mouth singeth not the praises of Jove and the praises of Christ." Those words have often been quoted with too little allowance for the Pope's very concrete reasons. Medieval boys generally began their Latin with the Psalms, thence it was common to pass on to Virgil, often beginning with the *Eclogues*, as was in fact my own case at an old-fashioned country grammar-school in 1870. There, as early as third *Eclogue*, the boy would find, "*Ab Jove principium, Musae, Jovis omnia plena*"—we begin with Jove, and Jove fills the universe. St Gregory was one who, most conspicuously, united fervent piety with a strong sense of business realities. Man's first and last business is to get to heaven, and this Pope was not less sensitive than others to poetry, but more consistent in his faith. That was felt by the Middle Ages themselves, and John of Salisbury records a tradition that he went so far as to burn the great Palatine library which he had inherited. Be that as it may, the Church was here often better than her official creed. Rashdall writes very truly (vol I p 27 of the 2nd edition) : " It is at least certain that so much of the culture of the old Roman world as survived into Medieval Europe survived by

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virtue of its association with Christianity The truth is that the hostility of Christian theologians to secular culture was to a very great extent merely the reflection within the sphere of Theology of the political and social conditions of the time If Gregory the Great interpreted the advance of the barbarian hosts, the slaughter and pillage which they brought in their train, as sure signs of the coming end, the events themselves were sufficiently calculated to discourage study and education, apart altogether from any theological interpretation which might be put upon them All culture that was not obviously useful was doomed to extinction Christianity at least considerably widened the limits assigned to utility The Christianized barbarian recognized the spiritual, if he did not recognize the intellectual, needs of humanity and some measure of intellectual cultivation was made necessary to the satisfaction of those spiritual needs, even by the narrowest interpretation of a religion whose principles had to be gathered from books, and whose services formed a small literature by themselves Narrow as may have been the Churchman's educational ideal, it was only among Churchmen that an educational ideal maintained itself at all The tendency of the Church's teaching was undoubtedly to depreciate secular, and especially literary, education . yet the grossest ignorance of the Dark Ages was not due to the strength of the ecclesiastical system but to its weakness."

We shall see later how the suspicion and fear of ancient culture lasted far beyond Gregory's time ; but, on the other hand, there were a few here and there in whom thirst for knowledge had not been quenched even by the calamities around them. " Gladly would he learn, and gladly teach," has never been quite dead at any time.



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For those things with which we are now concerned, no story can suit us better than the oft-quoted episode from the *Life* of Charles the Great by the Monk of St Gall. The details may be incorrect, but the spirit is true to life. He writes

“ Now it happened, when he [Charles] had begun to reign alone in the western parts of the world, and the pursuit of learning had been almost forgotten throughout all his realm, and the worship of the true Godhead was faint and weak, that two Scots [*i e* Irishmen] came from Ireland to the coast of Gaul, along with certain traders of Britain. These Scots were unrivalled for their skill in sacred and secular learning, and day by day, when the crowd gathered round them for traffic, they exhibited no wares for sale, but cried out and said, ‘ Ho, every one that desires wisdom, let him draw near and take it at our hands, for it is wisdom that we have for sale ’ ”

Charlemagne himself was a great patron of learning. he created a sort of Minister of Education in the person of the York scholar Alcuin. But Alcuin, like his greater English predecessor Bede, was rather a scholar than a thinker, we must wait for a generation longer before we come to a truly original thinker in John the Scot.

## CHAPTER V

### JOHN THE SCOT

WE come now to one of the most original of all medieval philosophers in the West, a man who comes like a meteor, and whose thoughts for a time seem almost to have died with him.

Charles the Great had been interested in all kinds of discussions, at his great Synod of Frankfurt he almost undertook to teach a Pope on the crucial question of image worship. He had also a chivalrous respect for the Mohammedan, Haroun al Raschid, who was his only rival in and within reach of Europe. His grandson, Charles the Bald, was one whose political failures were intimately connected with his private virtues. His very surname might suggest something of that kind. This man's father, Louis the Pious (or as the French translate his name, *le Débonnaire*), had already distinguished himself rather by good intentions than by firm action. At one time he seriously thought of retiring to a monastery. soon afterwards we find him meditating marriage with a second wife. She was chosen in a sort of beauty competition, Judith, the daughter of Count Welf of Bavaria, one of Louis's greatest feudatories. The only child of that marriage was this Charles, whose very birth created one of his father's greatest difficulties, for here was a fresh claimant against the two elder sons for a third share

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in the great Empire Judith herself had been a friend and protectress of the Jews, and it was natural that her son should be fond of discussions at his Court, and tolerant of all that could not be proved to be wrong. This was not an advantage to statecraft, especially in that rudimentary and turbulent Europe of the ninth century, but it will easily explain why he befriended John Scot, "the belated disciple of Plato and the last representative of the Greek spirit in the West"

John was born between 800 and 815, and almost certainly in Ireland, since he called himself Eriugena. He became the great philosopher of the Palace School under Charles the Bald, at whose request he translated from the Greek the *Celestial Hierarchy* and the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* of the pseudo-Dionysius

Charles died in 877, when John was apparently still in France. The chronicler William of Malmesbury, who is usually very accurate, though he wrote nearly three centuries later, tells us that John was invited to England by King Alfred, and that he had settled at Malmesbury Abbey, where William himself was writing. This was probably not as a monk of the house, but as a teacher, it was common at even so early a date for the Benedictines to import teachers from outside. At Malmesbury, according to William, he was murdered in the church itself by his scholars with the iron styles which they used for their writing-tablets. The reverence for this martyrdom caused him to be dignified later on with a specially solemn tomb, from which William quotes the epitaph, this tomb, however, was destroyed in about 1080, together with those of former Abbots, by a new Abbot who was inspired by such hasty vandalism as was no less common in the Middle Ages than in later

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centuries The main importance of this life is that we hear of no formal condemnation of John personally by any definite Church authority It is true that the mere fact of his translating those Greek books caused some suspicion of heresy in the mind of a very powerful and masterful contemporary Pope, Nicholas I, but we probably have nothing there beyond a vague suspicion of Greek thought in the mind of a pontiff who, at that moment, was in definite conflict with the Eastern Church on points of ecclesiastical politics William of Malmesbury writes no more than this, that "in certain matters John turned aside from the path of the Latins inasmuch as he kept his ideas closely fixed upon the Greeks, wherefore he was often estimated as a heretic" Into this we can read no more than into the mind of Nicholas I, namely, vague hostility to the Greeks

And in fact, in so far as he has any spiritual ancestry, except St Augustine, it is Greek His debts are partly to orthodox writers, but he is especially indebted to the non-orthodox, and above all to this pseudo-Dionysius Medieval tradition identified this man with Dionysius the Areopagite, who conferred with St Paul after his speech at Athens (Acts xvii 34), and whom later Christians willingly believed the saint to have converted. Just about this time, somewhere round the year 830, the identification of this Dionysius with St. Denis of France had crystallized into a dogma which, later on, it cost Abailard almost his life to contradict That legend added enormously to the popularity of this Greek philosopher's books. They had, in fact, been written about A.D. 500, but to the minds of this later age there was an immense appeal in their mysticism and their ritualism, and they exercised great influence on the growth of later Christian

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cult Up to that point, therefore, the Western Church had no reason for other than gratitude to this scholar who could bring over far better things than jewels and silks from the East But presently a storm-cloud came up, and John found himself involved in another man's philosophical troubles.

One Gottschalk, son of a Saxon noble, was vowed to the great monastery of Fulda by his father Reaching years of discretion, he repudiated this paternal dedication, and claimed the right of going out into the world. More than three centuries later, a papal decree would have permitted this, but the ninth century still submitted infants to the father's religious vow, taking example from Abraham and Isaac A Council at Mainz had indeed sufficient sympathy to support him here against the Abbot in 829 but that Abbot was the great Hrabanus Maurus, who brought the case before the Emperor and secured a decision favourable to his own authority. The utmost that was granted to Gottschalk was a change of monastery At Orleans in France, and later at Hautvillers, the great Hraban and the still greater Archbishop Hincmar of Reims never lost sight of him The Benedictine Rule and the consecrated customs rendered him almost helpless. When he persuaded friends here and there to bear messages or letters for him to outsiders, even to the Pope, that was a matter severely punishable. Hincmar describes how his discontent thus smouldered into a sort of madness He was imprisoned in a corner of Hautvillers, but with the same food and drink as other monks, yet "though washing is not denied unto him, he hath refused since his entrance to wash not only his body but even his hands and face. At first, he would fain have gone as Adam went before his sin; but

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when the cold began to constrain him, then he was fain to seek not only garments, but a cloak of skins and a fire to boot." The man was a true poet. Among other lyrics and hymns he has left a haunting complaint, far above the ordinary medieval Latin standard, that he cannot sing the Lord's song in a strange land. The sense of injustice became a monomania with him · he studied Augustine, and was fascinated by all the hard sayings about God's Predestination. Strictly speaking, he himself went at no single point beyond the saint ; but the bitterness of his soul made him concentrate upon the bitterest elements in those writings, and by this over-emphasis to falsify them. In effect, he denied Free Will to an extent which would have rendered the sacramental system superfluous · why confess and strive for priestly absolution, when the Great Decision has already been made from all eternity ? On his deathbed, he refused Christ's Body and Blood at the price of a recantation, and (in Hincmar's words) "went into his own place "

Calvin is so often imagined to have invented Predestination that it is necessary here to draw the orthodox medieval distinction. The Church, by emphasizing the milder Augustinian sayings as Gottschalk emphasized the harder, made God "predestine" the Good, and merely "fore-know" the Wicked. In each case He knows the final end. In the former He is also responsible for it, but not in the latter, there the man's evil will is to blame. Thus later Calvinism followed medieval orthodoxy in holding fast by Predestination, but went one step beyond it, with Gottschalk, in holding Reprobation also "the double Predestination, whether to Life or to Death [of the Soul]."

Gottschalk had therefore been twice condemned in

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his lifetime by Church Synods · the second, under Hincmar, in 849. In both cases, not only were his adversaries incapable of seeing the difficulty of the question, and the delicacy of the logical distinctions by which the Church strove to make God responsible for one side only. But, even beyond this, their own arguments were based mainly on some of the many treatises which passed falsely under Augustine's name. Alcuin's pupils, on the whole, supported Gottschalk. Then, after the heresiarch's death, Hincmar explicitly called for an opinion from a real philosopher, John the Scot, "the belated disciple of Plato, and the last representative of the Greek spirit in the West."

John answered Gottschalk not on the ground of Augustinian or other patristic writings, but on that of independent philosophy. Roughly speaking, he argues thus. In the first place, this crude and narrow conception of Predestination and Reprobation rests upon an assumption of the reality of time. Time is non-existent for God. All things that we call past and present and future are spread simultaneously before His eyes. Again, this crude presentment of the problem assumes the reality of Evil. In fact, this has no independent existence. Evil is simply the negation of Good. In both of those answers John was in fact reviving Platonic doctrines which he borrowed from the neo-Platonists. Here, then, comes a new factor into Western Church thought, to Augustine (in whom Platonism, though strong, is remote) is now added the direct influence of the later Greek Platonists; and after two or three centuries Aristotle also will come directly into the field.

This may help to explain the enormous influence of pseudo-Dionysius, with his *Celestial and Ecclesiastical*

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*Hierarchies.* Neo-Platonism, of which this anonymous philosopher was a representative, had been a creed which attempted to fulfil the same needs as Christianity. Often it had proved a bridge to the Christian Church, often, again, one of her bitterest enemies, as in the cases of Julian the Apostate and Hypatia. The Middle Ages sucked deeply from those books, mainly in mysticism and ritualism. St Thomas Aquinas commented on them, Dante was soaked in them, and Scholasticism was influenced also by their deeper philosophy.

To Eriugena, those deeper thoughts alone made any strong appeal. It was doubtless the pseudo-Dionysius that suggested to him the nullity of Evil, a doctrine which can be traced in germ from Plato and Augustine, and which Boethius explicitly asserted<sup>1</sup>. This was more definitely worked out by John. "He held that the ground and substance of all things is good; that what we call Evil is merely a privation of Good, and has no separate existence." So Aquinas after him. We may correctly say "This thing is evil" (adjective); but not: "Evil (noun) is." It was a thought dear to Browning also, as in "Abt Vogler."

"The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound"

But the most important of John's books, and that which earned him the painful distinction of condemnation by two Church Synods, was his work *On the Division of Nature*. In this he speaks of God as the only

<sup>1</sup> *Consolatio*, lib. iii (Loeb trans., p. 291). His divine interlocutor says "No man can doubt but that God is almighty." "No man," quoth I, "that is well in his wits." "But," quoth she, "there is nothing that He who is almighty cannot do." "Nothing," quoth I. "Can God do evil?" "No," quoth I. "Wherefore," quoth she, "evil is nothing, since He cannot do it who can do anything."



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complete existent reality, the only complete being. All persons in this universe, and all things, are real only in so far as they partake of His being. He breathes them forth from Him like motes in a sunbeam. He permeates them with His being throughout their existence in this world (just as we now know that waves of light permeate everything). And finally they are re-absorbed into His divine essence, to form part of it again to all eternity. This, of course, comes perilously near to Pantheism—i. e. the identification of the Universe with God, the Creator with Creation. In one place he says "God creates himself, in creating this visible Universe." Then, if all things return to God, and if Evil has no real existence, does it not follow that every human soul shall some time be saved? He shrinks from saying this in so many words—seems, indeed, to contradict himself. But he rejects the notion of an eternal hell of physical pain, and certainly he shows extraordinary freedom of thought on this point—e. g. he grants brute beasts some sort of soul, and therefore of immortality. And most readers will agree with Poole "When a man makes use of conventional language, and also of expressions opposed to it and strikingly original, we cannot hesitate as to which is the genuine utterance of his opinion" (p. 62). Professor Gilson puts it less bluntly.

"We must never forget, in reading him, that his words are often bolder than his thought—he always says what he wants to say in the most dangerous and paradoxical form; and, when we strip his thought of the brilliant but disquieting formulas in which he clothes it, it is generally found nearer to traditional teaching than it might have seemed at first" (p. 25).

Another striking point of John Scot's doctrine is his anticipation of Descartes's *Cogito, ergo sum*. Even if I

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doubt, still *I am*. This is not the place to criticize that thought, but certainly the systematic exposition of it in the sixteenth century is one of the three points which made Descartes the founder of a new and striking epoch in philosophy. The germ may be found in Augustine, but it comes out far more clearly in John Scot “*Dum ergo dico intelligo me esse, nonne in hoc uno verbo, quod est intelligo, tria significo a se inseparabilia ? Nam et me esse, et posse intelligere me esse, et intelligere me esse, demonstro ?*”<sup>1</sup>

Characteristic, again, is the lofty place that he assigns to Reason. Thinking is man's highest occupation: what creation is to God, thought is to man. Without thought—that is, so long as it is just passively received—the Christian creed can scarcely rise above the level of mere credulity, Faith and Reason should be inseparable. So said the most orthodox Anselm, “*credo ut intelligam*”, but John would have asserted the inseparability from the opposite side, “*intelligo ut credam*”. Not that he claimed the right of rejecting whatever he could not understand—on the contrary, he insists upon the Unknown, the Unknowable, and the Indefinable. But (he maintains) the scheme of the world as mirrored in human reason is fundamentally identical with its reflection in God's revelation. In this extreme confidence in human reason, he resembles medieval Platonists. Our reason (they held) being part of the Divine Reason, is specially adapted to grasp the Divine attributes, the Divine purpose. “The Human Reason” (says John) “is the dwelling-place of the Word of God.”

<sup>1</sup> “When, therefore, I say *I understand that I am*, do I not, in that one word *understand*, make three inseparable assertions ? For I show that (1) *I am*, and (2) *I can understand that I am*, and (3) *I do understand that I am*.”

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And upon this assumption he acts boldly . he follows Reason whithersoever it seems clearly to point the way.

Therefore, in spite of his overwhelming reverence for St. Augustine, he does not hesitate to contradict him on crucial questions of Salvation and Predestination. Or rather, he insists that Augustine *cannot really mean* a thing which human reason condemns e.g. that God has not only set some men apart for eternal life, but practically condemned others from their birth—and these the great majority—to eternal torture Augustine (he says) must be here arguing not by syllogism, which enforces intellectual assent, but by the enthymeme, which only *seeks* assent Thus the enthymeme stands as rhetoric stands to logic , it aims not at demonstration, but at suggestion, or consideration . So again with the Bible , we can only grasp it through Reason. Since God cannot contradict Himself, wherever the Bible seems contradictory to reason, it is because we misread it Light, as it comes from God, is pure and white and clear in itself The shifting colours which sometimes puzzle us are but the iridescent play of that light as broken by the irregularities of the human mind “ For ” (writes John) “ the sense of the divine utterances is manifold and infinite, even as in one and the same feather of the peacock we behold a marvellous and beautiful variety of countless colours.” Shelley, of course, caught at that same idea “ Life with its dome of many-coloured glass Stains the white radiance of Eternity ” It is not surprising that the orthodox of the later Middle Ages had little use for this man He came like a meteor, and it may almost be said that he faded like a meteor, so far as the official schools were concerned. But in nooks and corners he was still

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enough read for Honorius III. (1225) solemnly to condemn his *De Divisione Naturae*. Moreover, it is extremely probable that it was his pantheistic tendencies which gave the impulse to such Parisian scholars as Amaury of Bène and David of Dinant, who were condemned in 1207 and 1210.

On the other hand, in John's lifetime he himself enjoyed comparative impunity, unless indeed we are to accept William of Malmesbury's story of his murder by his pupils. The Inquisition was, as yet, very far off, and his doctrines were too abstruse to arouse those popular passions which found vent in lynch law. True, some of his doctrines were explicitly condemned in his lifetime by two Church Synods, and by implication (it is sometimes maintained) at Rome. Nicholas I. was not the man to shrink from any bold step when he was sure of his ground, but he may well have shrunk from active interference here, where he could not have stepped in without pronouncing an official definition in the face of "this *enfant terrible* of his age." De Wulf sums up the philosopher clearly enough.

"He was far in advance of his time. While his contemporaries were only lisping in philosophy, and even his successors for centuries did no more than discuss a small number of disconnected philosophical questions, Eriugena in the ninth century worked out a complete philosophical synthesis. He was at once the scholar and the man of genius."

## CHAPTER VI

### LIMITATIONS

BETWEEN John the Scot and the Revival of A.D. 1000 there is no name which need engage us in a brief sketch like this. Here, then, let us pause to consider the conditions which hampered medieval thought throughout that melancholy interregnum, and indeed far beyond.

The purely material difficulties are obvious enough: wars, famine, pestilence, scarcity of books. This last cause, which was sometimes grotesquely exaggerated a century ago, is now unduly minimized. Since the exaggerations were exploded by S. R. Maitland in his *Dark Ages*, scholars have not taken proportionate trouble to correct the somewhat exaggerated optimism which Maitland suggests, even where he does not consciously express it. If our remote ancestors had cared more for learning than they actually did—we may add, no doubt, “more than we do”—then they could easily have produced incomparably more MSS. than they ever had. Again, there was the division between East and West, implying often actual warfare and always deep theological and cultural estrangement. Although John the Scot enriched western thought directly by the translation of that pseudo-Dionysius which, once found, was taken straightway to the bosom of the Roman hierarchy, and though in other ways he enriched it still more indirectly,

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yet he earned thereby less gratitude than suspicion. But there is another consideration, far less obvious than those, yet perhaps even more powerfully operative, which seems to have escaped historians almost altogether. Not only had the so-called Church Universal shrunk now almost to the dimensions of a purely Latin Church, but even its Latinity was unstable. To this subject, then, we must now turn, with an emphasis proportionate to the neglect which it has hitherto suffered. The evidence, to be convincing, must be cumulative, and, therefore, I am printing it in full detail elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Here, there is no room but for the salient points; for more extended quotations with chapter and verse references, I must refer to that other volume.

In the first place, we frequently find even the most learned scholars of their age turning naturally to the mother tongue when their nature was most deeply moved. With St. Aelred of Rievaulx at the end of the twelfth century, as with Erasmus in full Renaissance, the last word was an appeal to God in English or Dutch. So, again, a scholar would have his own private prayer in the vernacular, and a mystic whose professional life was in Latin would receive and record divine revelations in the mother tongue. For, very early in our period, Latin had ceased to be a mother tongue even in what we now call the "Latin countries." Unwary modern scholars are sometimes misled by the fact that the term *Lingua Romana*, in medieval parlance, means not Latin but what we now call the Romance Languages, especially French. As ordinary speech became progressively debased, the study of classical Latin—or even of approximately classical—became an increasingly artificial effort.

<sup>1</sup> *Europe's Apprenticeship* (Nelson, 1939)

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Hence the paradox that the worst Latin was written in the "Latin Countries" Gregory of Tours, the great French chronicler of about 570, is childishly incorrect in comparison with our Bede of a century and a half later and the comparison of legal charters is even more favourable to the Saxons as compared with contemporary Frenchmen, Italians, or Spaniards. Thus, in England, from the Conquest onwards, all learning was ecclesiastical, that is, Latin, and this went far to strangle English prose, hitherto vigorous, for a couple of centuries. This is admirably brought out by Professor R. W. Chambers in his *Continuity of English Prose*. Thus we may divide our period into stages. In the first, men still spoke and wrote Latin naturally on the Continent, but with progressive debasement. Then, among the descendants of the barbarians, Latin was more or less intensely studied with conscious effort—but the classical Latin, by this time, far less than the ecclesiastical. Charlemagne did much here, as in all other fields of civilization. With the Englishman Alcuin—the Emperor's Minister of Education, as he has been called—he strove hard to raise the level of clerical culture, and to bring the Church back to a correct text of the Vulgate Bible. He made war upon faulty texts (so a monk of St. Gall puts it) even as he made war against his enemies in the field. Three centuries later there was another conscious and determined revival among the Episcopal schools in Germany and France, especially at Chartres and Orleans. Three centuries later, again, came the Renaissance in full flood; classical Latin was studied with an enthusiasm which rendered scholars unjust to the real, though humbler, merits of the medieval ecclesiastical tongue. Hence an exaggerated contempt which grew to its height

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in the eighteenth century, and in Britain was killed by Scott and the Romantics, but more especially by S R Maitland in his *Dark Ages*. Yet here again, as usual, reaction went too far, and Maitland, though nearly always accurate in his facts, leaves readers with a more favourable impression of medieval learning than can be justified by all that has come to light during the century since he wrote.

It is natural, but dangerous, to assume that men who knew little outside ecclesiastical Latin may, on that account, be taken to have known proportionately more within that hallowed ground. The actual records, unfortunately, do not bear this out. Most of us have met with foreigners who, after forty or fifty years of domicile in Britain have unlearned more of their native tongue than they have gained of ours, and this is probably even more true of the Briton abroad. So in the *Dark Ages*. That calamitous time did much to destroy vernacular literature in the bud, yet without proportionate benefit to Latin, even on the ecclesiastical side. For this, in literary value, never got beyond and seldom equalled that Vulgate translation of the Bible which St Jerome, before the worst barbarian invasions, made with the help of earlier existing versions. It is no personal injustice to our remote ancestors, but a simple recognition of the appalling difficulties amid which they lived and struggled, that we should look unsparingly into the documents, and recognize how small some of their achievements were in comparison with what has been done since, from century to century, by men born in happier times. I am printing this evidence with a mass of detail in my *Europe's Apprenticeship*, a volume to be published by Messrs. Nelson concurrently with this.



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Meanwhile, that evidence may be very briefly summarized here.

We find that even monks, whose need of Latin was theoretically still greater than that of the ordinary clergy, sometimes taught their boys not by the direct method, but through the mother tongue. Again, from the earliest times to the latest, we find frequent provision made for a monk's considerable, or even complete, illiteracy. From Charlemagne onwards, we find provision made for those who knew no Latin, and attempts to remedy this. The Benedictine Rule was translated over and over again for the benefit of such Latin-less brethren and sisters. The series ends in the very year of Luther's revolt, 1517, with a mandate from Bishop Fox of Winchester, the founder of Corpus Christi College at Oxford. He caused the Rule to be translated for use in nunneries, because in them "the reading is always done in the Latin tongue, whereof they have no knowledge nor understanding, but are utterly ignorant of the same." Even when Renaissance and Counter-Reformation had done their work, this was still the case. St Teresa was of the Spanish nobility, a woman of great intellectual power, in a country where the vernacular itself is half Latin. Yet her spiritual progress was sadly hindered in early days by her linguistic ignorance. The Inquisitors banned certain translations from St John Climacus and other mystics, so "when they forbade many books in Spanish, that they might not be read, I felt much pain, since some of them gave me refreshment in the reading, and [now] I could no longer read them, because they were in Latin."

The Inquisitors here acted in accordance with a very ancient and deep-rooted ecclesiastical prejudice. Monas-

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teries and cathedrals and parish churches, but especially the first, had stood out like islands in the flood of invading barbarism. In process of time, therefore, these sanctuaries became sacrosanct, and were tempted to magnify their office beyond all reason. The cleric had for so many generations been the only man who could read, that at last, he became a monopolist. By his emphasis on this sacred possession, he gradually, in effect though not intentionally, took away the key of knowledge. After many generations this at last became conscious and intentional—the pearl of knowledge—and especially of Bible knowledge—must not be cast before swine. The Waldensians and others who tried to break down this barrier were treated as heretics, until Bible knowledge in a layman became almost synonymous with heresy. That comes out, among many other sources, in the autobiography of the Lynn mystic, Margery Kempe [1420]. Orthodoxy maintained that the Latin had a miraculous effect which no mere vernacular could possess, for by that time men had completely forgotten that the Vulgate itself was simply a vernacular version from the original Greek and Hebrew, it was treated—and is sometimes treated even to-day—as a book directly inspired. Just as the Mass was an *opus operatum*, a sacrament which, beyond its major effects, had much influence even upon those who did not understand it or lent a mere careless attendance, so also the sacred language, the Latin, had its magic influence for good. A fifteenth-century devotional manual, *Merita Missæ*, tells the laity to stand reverently while the Gospel is read, for they will receive grace by simply hearing this without understanding it, even as an adder is influenced by the charm which she does not comprehend. By this time, the

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friction was becoming so acute that Johann Busch, one of the most able and broad-minded of conventual Visitors, thought it improper for nuns to have Missals in the vernacular. There was thus a fight of growing intensity (until Luther's revolt settled the question with brutal directness) for a vernacular liturgy in the Roman Church.

Meanwhile the theory of a completely Latinized monasticism was more and more confessedly breaking down. As early as the thirteenth century, in great abbeyes like Westminster and St Augustine's at Canterbury, the novice made his solemn lifelong profession not in the language of Bible and Liturgy, but in French, the dialect of the upper classes. Later, we find the whole elaborate proceeding conducted in homely English. The decrees of Benedictine and Augustinian General Chapters, and the reports of orthodox Visitors, strove frequently but vainly for maintenance of the old Rule. Indeed, the Visitors' own records betray obliquely that they interrogated the brethren in English. The fifteenth-century *Litteræ Cantuarienses* show even priors and bishops writing to each other by preference in English. Monastic documents were now more frequently written in the vernacular, and at two rich houses, Godstow and Oseney, almost in the heart of Oxford scholarship, efforts were made to translate the chartularies. At Leipzig University, during the solemn exercises for the degree of D D, Busch was scandalized that the disputants should spend so much of their time in correcting each others' Latin blunders.

For general clerical ignorance, the evidence is even stronger than for monasteries and universities. To begin with, we have generalizations from the most unimpeachable witnesses. King Alfred was scandalized by

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the illiteracy of his clergy. Roger Bacon, wishing to illustrate mere parrot-learning, takes for his instance "just as boys gabble through the psalter which they have learnt, and as clerks and country priests recite the Church services, of which they know little or nothing, like brute beasts." His contemporary, St Thomas Aquinas, is almost equally emphatic. It was evident ignorance of "grammar"—that is, of Latin—which stimulated Wykeham to his great double foundation of Winchester and New College. And so on till a few months before Luther's revolt, when the great Strassburg Cathedral preacher, Geiler, attributed most of the Church's failings to the bishops who ordained so many "who know not how to write or speak Latin." Wolsey published a statute for clerical education beginning, "Ignorantia Sacerdotum." This title, and most of the contents, were borrowed from a similar reforming statute of Archbishop Pecham in the thirteenth century.

Finally, these generalizations are fully borne out by what we know of individual cases. Giraldus Cambrensis has recorded a good many of these. He was satirist as well as historian, yet there is no reason to doubt the essential truth of these, in the face of the most irrecusable cold-blooded records. In 745 St Boniface found a priest so ignorant that he could not even pronounce the brief baptismal formula, and Pope Zacharias had to decide whether, in such cases, the child was indeed saved from hell or not. About 1440 St. Bernardino of Siena quotes the case of four others who did not even know the four words needed for effecting Transubstantiation, *Hoc est corpus meum*. One said, "I never bother about it. I just say an *Ave Maria* over the wafer"—and the congregation, of course, fell into involuntary

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idolatry by worshipping a morsel of bread. In 1222, no doubt by reason of Innocent III.'s recent attempt to raise the standard of clerical education, a commission examined the priests who were serving in seventeen parishes appropriated to the Dean and Chapter of Salisbury. Five of them were found incapable of translating the first words of the first prayer in the Canon (or essential central portion) of the Mass. One was set to parse "What governs this first word, *Te*?" He answered. "Pater, for He governeth all things." We have similar examinations a few years later, in still greater detail, from the Register of Odo Rigaldi, Archbishop of Rouen and personal friend of St. Louis. They tell the same tale. Erasmus recounts how the Bishop of Utrecht struggled hard to make his ordination examinations a reality, but was beaten in the end. He might reject one ignorant candidate, but could not find a better to take his place. After all, the bishops themselves were often equally ignorant, and sometimes even Popes. Paul II. (1464-71) never spoke at secret consistories and congregations except in the vulgar tongue. On one occasion, his advocate broke down in consistory. Paul "was wroth, and would have taken his place, but he himself broke down likewise, and worse than the advocate, which was a great and ludicrous scandal."

Gradually, therefore, the despised vernaculars began to make their way. Dante's great master, Brunetto Latini, wrote his popular encyclopædia in French, "because the French speech is more delectable and more common to all men." Dante, if Boccaccio's *Life* of him can be trusted, deliberately chose Italian rather than Latin for his *Commedia*, because "if written in the vulgar tongue it might meet with more favour." But Dante himself

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gives deeper reasons also in his *Convivio* and *De Vulgari Eloquentia*. For instance: "A man's proper vernacular is nearest unto him, in as much as it is more closely united to him, for it is singly and alone in his mind before any other." Again: "The vernacular is the nobler, as being more natural to us, whereas the other is rather of an artificial kind." By end of that century, Charles V. of France was employing a whole body of translators. In England, Trevisa's *Dialogue between a Lord and a Clerk* shows the prejudices which confronted those who tried to break this frost of translations from the Latin. The hierarchy, far from encouraging popular education in this field, was almost always on the other side, whether actively or in mere inertia. It seems incredible, yet it is true, that the first standard English translation of the Lord's Prayer was made by Henry VIII, the rebel from Rome. Something like a score have survived, embedded in different manuscripts, but scarcely two or three can be found alike, it is evident that the medieval Church never had an authorized version. Yet the general march of the fifteenth century broke this down, and a glance at the catalogue of Early English Text Society reprints will show how the English lower clergy and bourgeoisie hastened then to make up for lost time. In short, we are using no more than ordinary epigrammatic licence if we say that medieval Latin, beginning as a necessary prop, ended as a clog. It estranged the thinker from common life, and did not raise him proportionately into higher realms of thought, in comparison with what the vernaculars might have done for him in the last centuries of the Middle Ages. There has been no revolution in English literature comparable to that which followed upon the circulation of the whole Bible in the mother

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tongue Moreover, that revolution was no matter of mere superficial style, but of thought also It was a momentous step forward not only in rhetoric but in philosophy

Sometimes, in the Middle Ages and beyond, Latin did what no vernacular could possibly have done Its lapidary force lent itself perfectly to liturgical poetry : St Thomas Aquinas could have written his best hymns in no modern language Here and there the scholastic philosophers, like Spinoza after them, expressed themselves with a pointed and impressive brevity which renders translation very difficult Latin had the enormous advantage of helping international inter-communication in ages when travel was difficult, and immeasurably more dangerous than to-day It produced, during the Middle Ages, a little poetry which is comparable to the best in the secular vernacular , yet very little when we consider the scholarly élite and the many generations and the vast territories from which these choice specimens are drawn But, for many generations before its disappearance as a written language, it had been little more than a stop-gap, holding its ground mainly because no organized and systematic attempt was made to supersede it.

The limitations imposed by hierarchical orthodoxy are too well known to need much emphasis at this point , we shall see concrete instances later on Meanwhile we need only bear in mind that, for century after century, it was as dangerous for any thinker in Western Europe to publish heterodox doctrines as it has become in these last few years to run counter to the ruling creed in Russia, Italy, or Germany.

One final point must be mentioned which has received

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far less consideration than it deserves. In the West, with which alone we are concerned here, the thinking society of the Middle Ages was almost entirely celibate. In Greece, the lower clergy had indeed regularly married, frequently choosing daughters of their fellow-clergy; but the prelates were chosen exclusively from the monasteries, and those alone have had any real opportunity of distinguishing themselves as thinkers and writers. Thus medieval thought was celibate thought, for good or for evil. As it was not cross-fertilized by the influence of common speech, so it lacked also the cross-fertilization of women's ideas. It is true that this celibacy was far less strict than is often imagined. On that point the evidence is too definite and too ubiquitous for any apologist to have ventured upon close grips with Dr Lea of Philadelphia, or with the brothers Theiner in Rome; indeed, it is those two Roman Catholic scholars (one of them Prefect of the Vatican Archives) who sum up more gloomily than the Quaker-bred Lea.<sup>1</sup> But, though quasi-marriage was common among the English clergy for long after the Conquest, and concubinage in the later Middle Ages is oftentimes complained of by orthodox contemporaries as notorious and ineradicable, yet in scarcely any cases were these unions such as would be likely to fertilize higher thought. The common medieval word for such partners was "Kitchen-maid"—*focaria*. In ancient Greek society, their counterparts had been called *ἐταῖραι*, "Companions"; and the difference of terms answers to an almost essential distinction of persons. Pericles and Aspasia will occur to everybody, but we have also Socrates and Diotima, a

<sup>1</sup> I have dealt with this question at some length in *Sectarian History* (Wessex Press, Taunton, 1937), especially pp 18-26, 90-92 (4,868)



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case equally significant whether that was a real person, or only *ben trovata* by Plato for his dialogue on Love. Athenaeus also connects many ancient philosophers with the names of particular women.

The medieval exceptions are here almost more significant than the general rule. Dante was a married man, but his *De Monarchia* was in the nature of a revolt against ordinary scholastic doctrine. It is still more important that many of the mystics had each his own Egeria ; some nun or authoress to whom he attributed as much inspiration as J S Mill to Mrs Taylor, for instance, or Auguste Comte to Clotilde de Vaux. But mysticism, as we shall see, was to some extent a solvent of scholasticism ; and, even among the mystics, though no breath of scandal tarnished the reputation of the greatest men, Church disciplinarians did all they could to discourage " pious friendship," and epistolary correspondence itself was by no means always allowed. Our frankest witness on this point is the Spanish Bishop and Papal Penitentiary Alvarus Pelagius, whose words leave no doubt as to the predominantly celibate spirit of thinkers even in his own Franciscan Order.<sup>1</sup>

The most striking exception of all is Abailard. Here, for once, we have a woman intellectually worthy of the philosopher, and in many respects his superior in character : moreover, her own letters corroborate what he tells us in his. Fulbert, Héloïse's uncle, was at first furious with his niece's seducer, but finally forgave him on condition of marriage. This, however, was to be secret, " lest I should incur loss of reputation," for Abailard was not only a teacher in the schools but also

<sup>1</sup> See my *Five Centuries of Religion*, chap II, p. 546

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Canon of Notre Dame. "She, however, by no means approved nay, she utterly dissuaded me. . . . She asked what glory she would have in me, while she rendered me inglorious and humiliated us both alike. What punishment would she deserve from the world, if she took so great a light away ! What curses, what harm to the Church, what tears of philosophers must follow upon this marriage ! How indecent, how lamentable would it be that I, whom Nature had created for all, should dedicate myself to one woman and submit to so great baseness ! For she violently detested this marriage, which would be disgraceful to me in every way : she pleaded that my loss of reputation would be grievous ; and she urged those difficulties of wedded life which St Paul exhorteth us to avoid " (1 Cor. vii. 27ff). To this she added satirical arguments from that same source which so infuriated the Wife of Bath. She exposed in plain language the miseries of crying children, dirt, disorder in a home of limited income none but the rich could enjoy learned leisure in the married state In all ages, philosophers have kept their independence only by leading a life of limited means. " ' If, then, lay folk and pagans lived thus, men who were bound by no profession of Religion, how oughtest thou to act, both Cleric and Canon, lest thou shouldest prefer base pleasures to Divine Service, lest this Charybdis should swallow thee headlong, lest thou shouldest plunge shamelessly and irrevocably into uncleannesses ! If thou carest not for thy clerical prerogative, at least defend philosophic dignity ' She added how perilous it would be for me to bring her back [to Paris, from the safe home I had found in my native Brittany for her and our boy], and how far more dear she would esteem it

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to be called my mistress than my wife." But he had promised to the uncle, and in that uncle's presence the marriage was solemnized in secret. Rumours, however, soon got abroad. Fulbert broke his oath of secrecy and divulged the marriage, Héloïse stoutly denied it; to escape from his insults she followed Abailard's decision and went to the nunnery of Argenteuil. Then it was that "Fulbert or his kinsfolk, opining that I had now grossly deceived them, and that I wished to rid myself of her by thus making her a nun," hired two ruffians to fall upon Abailard by night and emasculate him. Public opinion reprobated the outrage: the two ruffians were themselves caught, blinded, and emasculated; yet it shattered Abailard's career as an official teacher. He was left to reflect "with what widespread tidings this my singular disgrace would overflow the whole world. What further path would be open to me? With what presumption could I appear before the public, to be pointed at by all men's fingers, to be reviled by all tongues, a monstrous gazing-stock to all men? In this miserable contrition of mine it was (I confess), confusion rather than the devotion of a convert that drove me to a lurking-place in a monastic cloister, after Héloïse, at my command, had first taken the veil of her own free will and entered a nunnery." All this is echoed by Héloïse in her first letter, where she writes "Forthwith, at thy command, I changed both my dress and my mind, that I might show thee as possessor of my mind as well as my body . . . Although the name of *wife* seemeth holier and stronger, yet to me the word *mistress* hath ever seemed sweeter; or, if thou disdain it not, *concubine* or *harlot*."

How scholars flocked to Abailard from all quarters

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even when he went out into the wilderness, and how his success and his boldness led to final condemnation, we shall see in their proper place later on. But the significant point of his matrimonial story—and it should be read either in the accurate and cheap French translation of this whole correspondence, or in the English of Mr. C H Scott-Moncrieff, or in Miss Enid M'Leod's *Héloïse*—is the position of almost all medieval scholastic teachers, ambiguous to an extent which our own age and civilization find it difficult to comprehend. On the one hand, the three "Major" or "Sacred" clerical Orders (Priest, Deacon, and Subdeacon) had gradually been debarred from marriage under any circumstance. In the later Middle Ages the thing was not only forbidden under heavy penalties, but even annulled as legally impossible, and St Thomas More only voiced the opinion of orthodoxy in his own day when he insisted that the "marriage" of a priest was "more sinful than whoredom." On the other hand, clerics in Minor Orders (who, on the whole, were more numerous) were not debarred from legal marriage. Yet a distinction was made, if beneficed, they lost by marriage all right to that benefice. Even a parish clerk, it was held, lost his benefice by that act, so that Chaucer's Absolom is almost necessarily a bachelor. Again, endowments in the modern sense were unknown. Even after Abailard's day, when the universities had grown up, the teacher was commonly either dependent upon his fees or endowed with some Church benefice, into which he put a curate on a bare living wage, and drew the rest of the income as an absentee. Even Wyclif, who criticized the prevalence of non-residence among ordinary rectors, lived at Oxford like other professors upon

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this system. Therefore, although the scholastic teacher was too often a celibate only in name, it can only have been in the smallest minority of cases that he had the least chance of criticism and advice from an intelligent woman.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE SCHOOL OF CHARTRES

THE Carolingian Revival had been self-conscious: Charles had set himself to revive "the study of letters, well-nigh extinct" Unconscious Latin speech was long dead by that time, henceforward the classics are no longer living except where they can be consciously resurrected. This produces, in some powerful quarters at least, an equally conscious reaction not, of course, against Latin as a tool, but against profane knowledge as compared with theology. St. Peter Damiani, bosom friend of Gregory VII, argued that the Devil was the first grammarian, teaching men to give a plural to the word *deus* (Genesis, iii. 5).

Gerbert of Aurillac, who in 999 became Pope as Sylvester II, was often credited with witchcraft by reason of his proficiency in many profane sciences. In none was he profound, but it was suspicious that he should concern himself so much with matters that were not in the Bible or in ecclesiastical tradition.

Though the significance of the year 1000 has often been exaggerated, mainly through exclusive reliance upon a single chronicler, yet in fact it is very great. Many causes contributed, about that time, to a true revival, both material and spiritual. No great heathen invasion came off after that date, and comparatively few

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raids or incursions. Europe covered herself, in the picturesque words of the chronicler Glaber, in a white robe of new churches. Hungary was christianized, and its king, St Stephen, received baptism from Sylvester II. in 1000. And from about this time came that steady advance in "grammar" (that is, in systematic classical study) which, though at a later stage it supported in turn the conservative cause, aroused in its beginnings the distrust of the more conservative theologians.

The chief centres were Chartres and Orleans, especially the former. Here, for more than a century, there was little or no breach in the succession of remarkable teachers, and those were the days when the personality of the teacher mattered far more than the atmosphere of the place, the university era had not yet dawned. Fulbert, Bishop of Chartres, who died in 1028, had been a pupil of Sylvester II. In his teaching there was no wizardry beyond the old Socratic fascination of free social and intellectual intercourse, with sincere desire for truth. The visitor may walk to-day with these men, in imagination, backwards and forwards through that public garden, overlooked by the cathedral, which looks down itself upon the Lower Town, and across the river to that plateau which swarms in these days with aeroplanes. There was the bishop's garden, and there Fulbert discussed daily with his pupils the duties of this present life and the good man's hopes of heaven as the only goal worthy of any literary or philosophical study. His pupils and their successors handed the torch on, and the school became the greatest of its kind in Europe during the early years of the twelfth century. Its chancellor, or chief teacher, then was Bernard, a Breton, who was succeeded after some interval by his brother Thierry

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Bernard neglected patristic tradition, and his school devoted its attention almost entirely to the ancient classics, to which they added the pseudo-Dionysius and John the Scot. They had, through Boethius, most of Aristotle's logic, their physical and mental philosophy they derived from Plato's *Timaeus*, and a few other filtrations from him. Those materials were scanty as compared with the translations which were destined to come into Europe a few generations later, but they were admirably exploited. John of Salisbury, one of the latest and most distinguished pupils of Chartres, and himself finally Bishop of that See, characterized Bernard as "the most perfect among the Platonicians of our day." His method was peripatetic, as Fulbert's had been, and this was continued by his pupils. He aimed rather at eliciting ideas than at putting them into men's minds. Whether Bernard modelled himself directly upon Quintilian, or John of Salisbury uses Quintilian's words as the most convenient description of this commanding teacher, we see him working as the most inspiring have worked in every age. Choose the best models for study, school yourself to accuracy. If you borrow anything, assimilate this thoroughly, make it into flesh and blood of your own. Let each day begin with some repetition from the day before. Be modest! He quotes from Augustine "The ancients thought it a virtue in a grammarian to be ignorant of something." Above all, keep piety, every philosophical discussion was concluded with prayer. We may fairly sum up his whole attitude in two words. Reverence and Hope. We may achieve serenity, if only we face the past and the future with a single eye. He was accustomed to draw a comparison which crops up again, whether by direct communication



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or independently, in Ludovicus Vives "We are as dwarfs mounted on the shoulders of giants, so that we see more and further than they; yet not by virtue of the keenness of our eyesight, nor through the tallness of our stature, but because we are raised and borne aloft upon that giant mass." He died between 1124 and 1130, bequeathing his books to the Cathedral library; twenty-four volumes, specifies the obituary, but we must bear in mind that such folios often contained the amount of three or four modern printed books. Chaucer's Clerk of Oxenford, it will be remembered, had "at his beddès heedè Twenty bokès, clothed in black and reedè" In Bernard's own words, the qualities of a true student are "a humble mind, inquisitive zeal, a quiet life, silent observation, poverty, and remoteness from our kindred"—*terra aliena*.

Bernard had brilliant pupils, direct and indirect William of Conches (d. 1145), his nearest rival in classical learning, extended his activities to theology also, but here he came into collision with the conservatives. They attacked him, not without some reason, for being more influenced by Plato than by patristic tradition. As Professor Gilson puts it "Like most of the thinkers of the Chartres School, he impresses us as one who thinks, not like St. Anselm, in order to understand his faith, but simply for the pleasure of thinking." Another of the school was Gilbert de la Porrée, afterwards Bishop of Poitiers (d. 1154), "the one man whom St. Bernard of Clairvaux unsuccessfully charged with heresy." One of the latest, and he from whom we know more historical particulars than from any of the others, was John of Salisbury, Bishop of Chartres from 1176 to 1180. He has left an account of his own education, which

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throws vivid light upon the whole school, in the second book of his *Metalogicon* (chap x.). He went first to Paris as a boy, somewhere between fifteen and nineteen.

“ When, as a lad, I first went into France for study’s sake, I addressed myself to Abailard, then head of the school of Ste Geneviève, an illustrious teacher and admired of all men. At his feet I acquired the first rudiment of dialectics, and snatched, according to the scant measure of my wits, with great avidity, whatsoever passed from his lips. Then, after his too hasty departure I learned from Master Alberic and Master Robert of Melun<sup>1</sup>. Both were men of keen intellect, and unconquerable thirst for study. With these I studied two years [in the rudiments of dialectics], until methought I knew these things as well as the nails upon my fingers. This at least I had learned, in the lightness of youth to account my knowledge of more worth than it was. Then, returning into myself and measuring my powers, I advisedly resorted, by the good favour of my preceptors, to learn Grammar from William of Conches.”

Here, at Chartres, under three able teachers, John studied the Latin Classics with extreme diligence for three years; then he began teaching himself.

“ I received the children of noble persons for instruction, who furnished me with a livelihood—for I lacked the help of friends and kinsfolk, but God assuaged my neediness—and the force of duty, and the instant questions of my pupils moved me the oftener to recall what I had learned.”

At this point he made the acquaintance of Adam, an Englishman who became Bishop of St Asaph in 1175, but who in Paris was called Adam du Petit-Pont, from his house on the Petit-Pont, where he taught. From Adam he learned a good deal more of the Aristotelian philosophy. The necessity of earning his living by teaching compelled him to spend seven years more in

<sup>1</sup> An Englishman, afterwards Bishop of Hereford and opponent of Becket, therefore of John, who was Becket’s firm friend.

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philosophy and theology—twelve years in all of learning and teaching in the schools. At the end of these twelve years, he went back to Mt Ste Geneviève (the present Quartier Latin of Paris) to his old teachers

“ Whom I had left, and who were still engaged in dialectics, that I might confer with them touching ancient matters of debate, that we might by mutual comparison measure what progress each had made. I found them as before, and where they were before, nor did they appear to have reached the goal in unravelling the old questions, nor had they added one jot of a proposition. They only had progressed in one point, that they had unlearned moderation and knew now no modesty, in such wise that one might despair of their recovery. And thus experience taught me a plain conclusion—that, whereas dialectic furthers other studies, so by itself it is bloodless and barren, nor doth it quicken the soul to yield the fruit of philosophy, unless the soul conceive from elsewhere [than from dialectics alone].”

John's *Policraticus* (by which title he intended “ Statesman's Book,”) aimed at drawing the pupil away from the vanities of court life to philosophy, from “ politics ” in the ordinary sense to the most intimate form of home politics. How are we to order our own lives? “ The book is, to some extent, an encyclopædia of the cultivated thought of the middle of the twelfth century. As an authority for the political history of the time, for the history of learning and philosophy, it is invaluable for the simple reason that it is not professed history ” (R. L. Poole, p. 191). In his *Metalogicon* John exploited, for the first time in the Middle Ages, the whole of Aristotle's logic, though on other subjects he gave his main allegiance to Plato. He may, in fact, be fairly taken as the typical ripe fruit of this school. In many ways he anticipated the scholarship which we regard as characteristic of the Renaissance. He wrote the best Latin of the Middle

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Ages, and in other ways also Cicero was his chosen model. Confused thought, confused writing, were an abomination to him. As far as possible, he confined himself to problems which offered real hope of solution by human reason. He turned deliberately away, as far as possible, from that dispute between Realists and Nominalists, round which, as we shall see, so much of medieval philosophical discussion revolved. He complained that this dispute had wasted more time than the Cæsars spent upon conquering the world, and more wealth than the Cæsars ever possessed. In so far as he did judge here, he followed the moderate course of his master Abailard. But this avoidance of current problems did not spring from timidity of choice or from easy scepticism. He felt that it is a man's part to choose wherever choice is possible, and that we are responsible not only for the best use of our intellect, but also for living in accordance with what we discover. "The philosopher is a lover of God." Thus, though the depth and extent of his classical learning remained unrivalled in the Middle Ages, Dr R. L. Poole can claim that "no man was ever less inclined to revive the intellectual or moral code of paganism. John would have himself judged before all things as a theologian his theology was based upon an extensive patristic learning." He may be left here to speak for himself (*Policrat*, vii chap. x). He quotes from Jerome :

"Love the knowledge of written books, and thou shalt not love fleshly vices"

Thence he continues (chap. xi)

"For this is true philosophy, and this the sweetest and most wholesome fruit of much study in books. Indeed, philosophy herself containeth a complete method of learning, she it is who governeth

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all things, and who hath appointed bounds and limits to every act or word or thought in human life Yet there is one thing whereunto even philosophy herself hath set no limit, there is one thing wherein the bounds that she prescribes are boundless For, whatsoever we do, whatsoever we say, all this should tend towards Him whom all true philosophers know to be Infinite—towards Him whose very essence it is to have neither bound nor limitation For if Plato speak truth in defining the philosopher as a lover of God, then how can philosophy be other than the love of things divine ? And let us

not forget that He who was the incarnate wisdom of God, prescribing bounds to many human actions, taught that the love of God should be boundless, except in so far as the virtue of charity is limited by the precept to love God with a love unlimited For he who said *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*, had first said *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and all thy soul and all thy mind and all thy strength*, adding thereunto *From these two words hang all the Law and the Prophets*

Here then we find that true and immutable rule for philosophers that, in all they read, in all they learn, in all they do, in all they leave undone, each should so guide himself as to further the cause of charity <sup>1</sup> For charity is never empty or solitary, but rather doth she bring into the mind of the man whom she consecrateth to piety, as into the temple of God, her sister-virtues of honour, temperance, soberness, shamefastness, and all other qualities that men hold in reverence Whatsoever in arts or in books tendeth to any other end than this, is no tenet of philosophy, but mere empty fables, fashioned by men upon whose impiety God's anger is revealed from heaven All such chatterings, to a true student of philosophy, seem mere unseasoned insipidities

Those who follow philosophy, and those who follow her not, speak sometimes the words of truth and justice, thus far, we find no difference But if a man speak both truth and falsehood, if he teach both good and evil, that man is no philosopher The vain pretender to philosophy doth indeed sometimes show the true path, but he is the true philosopher who walketh by the true path to which his words bear witness "

It would have been well for European thought if this school could have had a longer life Its aims and methods were admirable, but its materials were still

<sup>1</sup> *Caritas*, in medieval theology, is love to God and man, in that order, of course See *Imitatio Christi*, Book III, chap. v

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scanty, even after John had employed an Italian Greek to complete the translation of Aristotle's *Organon*. A generation later, when the whole of Aristotle came into the West through Arabic translations, the men who seized upon it most greedily were precisely those against whom John and his fellows had waged the fiercest warfare; those whose tendency was away from exact scholarship and in the direction of verbal disputation; not "Grammarians" but "Dialecticians." John speaks of them over and over again with exaggerated scorn. With such men.

"Wordy clamour is sufficient for victory Poets and historians were held of no reputation, and the men who spent their time on studying the ancients, were branded as asses So one could become a philosopher off-hand, for he who had come to the school without letters stayed there scarce for a longer space than the chicken needs to become a fledgling"

The new pedantry was specially insufferable, everything must be said or written in terms of scholastic formality

"One may not argue without preparatory appeal to argumentative terminology—*nec argumentum fieri licitum, nisi præmisso nomine argumenti*" (*Metal* Book I, chap iii) Rashdall laments with justice "Had the new Aristotle fallen into the hands of scholars trained in the school of Chartres, instead of into the hands of dialecticians versed in the debates of the Quartier Latin, the approximation which the great 12th century writers exhibit to the intellectual tone and level of the 16th might have been indefinitely more close than it actually was" (*Book I*, chap ii)

In a later chapter the reader may perhaps judge for himself how far this was mere mischance, and how far due to the conservatism of the classical scholars themselves.

## CHAPTER VIII

### REALISM AND ANSELM

REALISM in medieval philosophy is something very different from what that word signifies in ordinary speech of to-day. Nowadays, it is used rather of the man who stresses the reality of our sense-perceptions, among our ancestors, it was he who stressed the reality of abstract ideas. The great and never-ending battle of the medieval schools was that of Realist and Nominalist, and this conflict goes back to the heyday of Greek thought. It cannot be introduced better than in that paragraph which Rashdall consecrates to it at the beginning of his *Universities of the Middle Ages*

“The one fragment of ‘the Philosopher’ (as Aristotle was called in the Middle Ages) was a fragment of his *Logic*. And at the very threshold of *Logic* the student was encountered by this question of the reality of Universals—a question which ‘common-sense’ will undertake to clear up in five minutes, or which it will indignantly pronounce too trifling to be asked or answered. Yet he who has given his answer to it, has implicitly constructed his theory of the Universe.

“In the introduction to the *Logic* of Aristotle which was in the hands of every student even in the Dark Ages, the *Isagoge* of Porphyry, the question was explicitly raised in a very distinct and emphatic manner. The words in which this writer states, without resolving, the problem of the Scholastic Philosophy, have played perhaps a more momentous part in the history of Thought than any other passage of equal length in all literature outside the

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**Canonical Scriptures** They are worth quoting at length 'Next, concerning genera and species, the question indeed whether they have a substantial existence, or whether they consist in bare intellectual concepts only, or whether if they have a substantial existence they are corporeal or incorporeal, and whether they are separable from the sensible properties of the things (or particulars of sense), or are only in those properties and subsisting about them, I shall forbear to determine For a question of this kind is a very deep one and one that requires a longer investigation'

In other words, we use the word *man* in two senses, for the individual man or for humanity in general Which is the more real sense? To the extreme Realist, *humanity* alone has real existence; the changing perishable individual exists only as partaking in this undying reality To the extreme Nominalist, the individual man alone really exists, "*humanity*" is a mere unreal abstraction invented for convenience of speech. But let us look at the doctrine of the unreality of the Idea—the extreme Nominalism—from the following point of view An individual man, Darwin, invents the theory which we call Darwinism He himself was frail in health, retired, known personally to few even in his lifetime. Presently he disappears, and is no longer personally known to any man, he is rotting in the grave. But his theory, Darwinism, is known to millions now, and modifies the thoughts of millions more. Thus it is potent in direct proportion to Darwin's personal powerlessness or non-existence. Is Darwinism unreal, and was the defunct Darwin the only reality? The first Realist was Socrates. Protagoras and other Sophists rendered all knowledge impossible by emphasizing the dictum of Heraclitus "Into the same river no man ever plunges twice: the river has changed, and he himself has changed" To this Socrates answered. "The river passes, the man changes, but



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*humanity* and *fluidity* abide. The Individual is changing and deceptive ; the Universal is unchanging and trustworthy." Here, then, was a solid foundation for science. True knowledge, according to Socrates, is the knowledge of Ideas. But Socrates made no attempt to *separate* the Idea from Matter, the Universal from Particular. Plato did that, and most people would echo Aristotle's criticism that he thus imported great difficulties into the question. Still, this Socratic-Platonic Doctrine of Ideas not only first raised the question of Realism and Nominalism, but was the beginning of all metaphysics.

The Middle Ages interpreted Plato in the extremest realistic sense, and believed him to have taught that everything in the visible universe existed also so wholly in idea that it had its eternal exemplar, its exact archetype, in the Divine Mind. This is the significance of a story in the *Chronicle* of the friar Salimbene of Parma (about A.D. 1280) "I was once subject to a [Provincial] Minister named Brother Aldebrando, whose head was misshapen after the fashion of an ancient helmet, with thick hair on his forehead, so that whensoever it fell to his turn to begin in church that anthem beginning *Caput Draconis* (The Dragon's Head), then the Brethren would be moved to laughter' and he himself to confusion. And Brother Albertino of Verona (whose sayings were much remembered) was wont to say in jest that there must have been a hideous idea of this Brother Aldebrando in God's mind." Augustine's metaphysics were founded on Plato's—he (and, in fact, all the Fathers) presupposes a more or less Platonic philosophy, which was only partially dethroned by the rediscovery of Aristotle in the thirteenth century. But neither Plato nor any orthodox Schoolman ever asserted that there was

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only one real abstract principle, though their logic would seem to involve this. Again, though John Scot did not explicitly deal with the question, some of his tenets imply Realism in rather an extreme form. It tended to the assertion of one all-pervading abstract principle; and this, in its most unqualified form, would involve Pantheism. It was natural, therefore, that in the thought which was stimulated by Scot in later generations, an extreme Nominalism should arise in revulsion from extreme Realism. Perhaps not the first Nominalist, but certainly the first extreme Nominalist and the best known, was Roscellinus, who died about 1105. He contended that the Universal was no more than a mere word, an empty breath, "*non nisi flatus vocis.*" Therefore, that the colour of a horse has no existence independently of the horse that supports it, any more than wisdom, as such, exists outside the mind that is wise. But here there lurks a great paradox. Roscellinus's view was that all the things we call *horse* have nothing in common except the name. There is nothing universal about them, except that, to save the trouble of mentioning so many individual horses, we invent one name for the whole multitude of them. Then (asks common sense) why call *these* horses, and *those* cows? Does not even a small child recognize the one and the other quite correctly? Is there not a "horsiness" in the one, and a "cowiness" in the other? And can we attribute unreality to those qualities which give, as a rule, so plain a criterion for distinguishing one animal from the other? This seems a common-sense objection to extreme Nominalism, which it is hard to get over.

It will be seen that, if extreme Realism leads to Pantheism, extreme Nominalism was still more inimical

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to the orthodox medieval theology, and especially to the doctrine of Transubstantiation. It was natural, therefore, that Roscellinus in his book on the Trinity should have enunciated Tritheism, since he was bound to deny the reality of anything but the individual. To him, if there were three Persons, each of whom was God, there must somehow be three Gods, however he might try to avoid this. To Anselm, his opponent, the Universal was an even greater reality than the individual, the person. The colour red was a more real thing than the particular red horse, the quality of wisdom more real than the particular wise man. The Universal Godhead to him was the greatest Reality, in which the three Persons of the Trinity subsisted. No more can be attempted here than to bring out two points. First, that when this question had once been raised, it necessarily affected the whole thought of the Middle Ages, for that thought reposed upon a Bible partly coloured, and a patristic tradition very deeply coloured, with Platonism in one form or another. And, secondly, to show how the problem is really so difficult that we may easily understand why it is still open. Extreme Realism may seem on the face of it absurd yet extreme Nominalism will seem no less so when we consider what it actually means.

Against Roscellinus there came forward St Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), who has been called "the last of the Fathers of the Church, and the first of the Scholastics." Some, here, might make the reservation that St Bernard is the last of the Fathers, and that in Anselm the Scholastic method is not yet fully developed.

St. Anselm's works indicate a considerable current of

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free thought in the schools of his day, and this comes out also in the autobiography of his younger contemporary, Abbot Guibert of Nogent,<sup>1</sup> while they bear testimony at the same time to his essential honesty. Here we have an orthodox teacher stating quite fairly the doctrine which was directly contrary to his own belief, and spending all the resources of his intellect in combating them

Anselm is famous, among other things, for the phrase, "I believe, in order to understand"—*Credo ut intelligam*—which may in fact be traced back to Augustine. John the Scot, as we have seen, would rather have chosen the reverse order *Intelligo ut credam*. Anselm's method is to begin by assuming the tenets of Christianity, and then to prove these consonant with reason. His inspiration comes from the 43rd of Augustine's *Sermons* :

"Thou sayest, 'Let me understand, that I may believe' I reply, 'Believe, that thou mayest understand' Let the prophet judge between us, who saith 'unless ye shall have believed, ye shall not understand' (Is vii 9 acc to LXX) There is some truth in his saying 'Let me understand, that I may believe,' and some in mine who say with the Prophet 'nay rather, believe that thou mayest understand' Each says truth, let us come to an accord understand, that thou mayest believe, and believe, that thou mayest understand"

So Anselm, for himself, writes :

"No Christian ought to argue that anything *is not true* which the Catholic Church believes in the heart and confesses with the mouth ; but rather, keeping always to that faith, loving it, and living humbly

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<sup>1</sup> Many interesting sidelights come out in this book, which has been translated by C C S Bland. In spite of a good many technical errors from the pen of one who was by profession no medievalist, the translation gives an admirable picture of religious, intellectual, and social life at that day

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according to its precepts, he should strive his utmost to discover *how* it is true."

But he is a thoroughly honest searcher, and takes great pains to understand and meet the adversary's case. Fundamentally, Anselm aimed at the method of the true scientist. Others besides Darwin have emphasized the extent to which imagination must often outrun observation otherwise the collection of scattered truths is meaningless. Darwin's son writes in his abridged *Life* (1902, p. 95) .

"He often said that no one could be a good observer unless he was an active theoriser. This brings me back to what I said about his instinct for arresting exceptions—it was as though he were charged with theorising power ready to flow into any channel on the slightest disturbance, so that no fact, however small, could avoid releasing a stream of theory, and thus the fact became magnified into importance. In this way it naturally happened that many untenable theories occurred to him, but fortunately his richness of imagination was equalled by his power of judging and condemning the thoughts that occurred to him. He was just to his theories, and did not condemn them unheard, and so it happened that he was willing to test what would seem to most people not at all worth testing. These rather wild trials he called 'fool's experiments,' and enjoyed extremely. As an example I may mention that finding the seed-leaves of a kind of sensitive plant to be highly sensitive to vibrations of the table, he fancied that they might perceive the vibrations of sound, and therefore made me play my bassoon close to a plant."

Of Anselm, as of Darwin, it may be added (for he was a fundamentally honest thinker), "The love of experiment was very strong in him, and I can remember the way he would say, 'I shan't be easy till I have tried it,' as if an outside force were driving him."

As well known as Anselm's *Credo ut intelligam* is his "ontological" argument in his *Proslogion*. Here is an

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attempted proof of the existence of God from the standpoint of pronounced Realism. We possess (he argued) the idea of a Being so great that we cannot conceive a greater. But an existent Being is certainly, *caeteris paribus*, greater than a non-existent Being. Therefore this Greatest Conceivable Being must exist; otherwise it would not be the Greatest Conceivable. Therefore God exists. In his own words "For if that, than which we can conceive *no* greater, is in fact a thing than which we *can* conceive a greater this is a contradiction in terms. Therefore the thing than which no greater can be conceived does exist, not only in our own mind but in fact." This argument, in later centuries, was renewed by Descartes and Leibnitz, but it was contested from the first. Anselm's contemporary, the monk Gaunilo, argued against him "One might as well attempt to demonstrate the existence of an island in the ocean, the most beautiful of all islands, from merely imagining such an island." Aquinas also, and most of the great thirteenth-century Scholastics reject Anselm's argument as invalid here. Its realism was too pronounced as De Wulf writes "We might even call him an extreme realist, were we to take his language literally. We must however bear in mind the lack of precision that characterized the language of philosophy in the XI century." Lastly, we must notice Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*, with its new theory of the Atonement. In what sense did Christ's death "redeem" humanity? How was man "brought back", by whom and from whom? In the New Testament there is no systematic doctrine on this subject. The Early Fathers (and especially Origen) evolved a doctrine to the effect that Christ's death is in some way a ransom to Satan for man's soul, which had been lost for Adam's

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sin : a doctrine which is not entirely free from taint of Manichaeism. Anselm keeps to the legal idea—we must remember that he had been trained to the law—but represents the struggle as between the Justice and Goodness of God. Abailard, as we shall see, took this advance one step further.

## CHAPTER IX

### ABAILARD

ST. BENEDICT'S Rule, both in its original form and in such derivatives as the Carthusian, is frankly hostile to contact between monks and the outside world, apart from exceptional conditions. Here and there the monks, working under missionary conditions, became all things to all men. But it is a very false exaggeration to speak of them as the ordinary teachers and students and artists and physicians, and even politicians, of the Middle Ages. The best and most earnest monks would not even have felt themselves complimented by such an attribution. Those exterior activities were comparatively rare, when we consider the tens of thousands who at any given time could be found in the cloister. Moreover, such activities were not only irrelevant to St. Benedict's main object, which was that the monk should save his own soul, but were sometimes frankly a hindrance to "Religion," as monasticism was commonly designated in the Middle Ages. It is natural, therefore, that we should find only a small minority of monks among the leaders of medieval thought. The average monk must have known Latin considerably better than the average parish priest, and far better, of course, than any but a negligible minority of the laity. The Rule made definite provision for a certain amount of regular reading, a provision not unreal, though we have many indications



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that there was a great gulf here between theory and practice. But, even at the best, monastic conservatism went far to neutralize monastic opportunities. Monks could far more easily be mobilized against anything that savoured of novelty than kindled to any forward movement. The watchword was: "Hold your ground"—*Stare super antiquas vias*. More than one of the great Councils in the early Church was overborne—it may almost be said, terrorized—by the crowds of Eastern monks. Their ideal was to better the world by prayer and example, but it demanded that this betterment should be along the old paths.

We have seen how the monk Gottschalk raised the whole question of Predestination, which comes out, as living as ever, in Chaucer's *Troilus* and in *Piers Plowman*. But the whole point of Gottschalk's career is that he was a rebel monk, scarcely more normal than the pearl is to the oyster. Anselm, again, was a monk, like his predecessor and master Lanfranc. But each of those men was originally a lawyer, born in one of those North Italian cities where law was part of a nobleman's education. Each had worked his way half across Europe, teaching for his livelihood wherever he went. The cloister, however feverishly embraced at last, had been a second love to each of those men, and when, at Bec, the abbey was hard pressed to raise funds even for its necessary buildings, Lanfranc was commissioned to set up school again, and to fill the economic deficit with his fees. Anselm's thought is far less typical of monastic life than of the wandering scholar's disputations and conclusions. So, again, when we come to the great Friar-Schoolmen, Dominicans or Franciscans, we shall see how much they owed to the fact that they were only half-

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cloistered, and that their thought was worked out in disputation with the uncloistered masters and students who filled the lecture-rooms at Paris or Bologna.

As Abailard was intellectually the greatest among wandering scholars, so in many ways we may put him among those who were truest to type. We cannot entirely separate his philosophy from his life. Héloïse was as much part of him as St Bernard and the two condemning Councils were—we cannot class him among the celibate philosophers of the Middle Ages. However we may emphasize the sincerity of his later cloistered life, and acclaim it with Peter the Venerable as an end exactly consonant with that great and stormy career. The storms were part of the man, they raged in his mind as truly as in his relations with pupils or fellow-teachers.

He was born in 1079 near Nantes, of a father whose noble birth did not exclude great respect for learning. At a very early stage, the boy renounced all thoughts of a military career, and became what Heine would have called a Knight of the Holy Ghost. While yet in his teens he sat under Roscellinus and combated his extreme Nominalism. Thence he went to Paris, which was then already the metropolis of dialectics, and studied there under the most renowned dialectician of the day, Guillaume de Champeaux. Guillaume was a pronounced Realist, and Abailard, from the first, attacked his doctrine with a persistent vehemence which made him unpopular alike with the master and with the generality of his class. From Paris he went some twenty-five miles up the Seine to the cathedral city of Melun, where he had sufficient self-confidence to open a school of his own. Thence he migrated a little down the river, to Corbeil, where he was within easier reach of Paris.

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A severe illness drove him back to his Breton home, whence he emerged after a few years to join issue with Guillaume de Champeaux again. Here his criticism was so devastating that Guillaume practically retired from the field, and was soon removed from the tumult of the schools by promotion to the Bishopric of Châlons. These dialectical victories were not enough for Abailard. He went now to Laon, and sat under the most famous theologian of the time, Master Anselm, who must not be confounded with the Saint. Here, again, he was disputatious and aggressive, and found himself confronted with constitutional difficulties. The university age had not yet come, and the formality of a regular master's degree had not yet crystallized, but it was in process of formation, and conservatism was naturally shocked when Abailard began to lecture upon Ezekiel—a young learner who was only in the first stages of his formal theological studies, upon perhaps the most difficult book in the Bible. So he quitted this "barren fig-tree" of Laon and went back to Paris as teacher both in dialectics and in theology. Here, at least, his lack of any hierarchical claim to sit among the theologians would not be so obvious as in a small city like Laon.

Here, as Canon of Notre-Dame, he met with Héloïse, a girl already notable for her intellect and her acquirements. Her uncle committed her to Abailard's teaching, with the result we have already seen in Chapter VI. The abbey in which Abailard took refuge after his disgrace was St. Denis, the great royal house in which monks lived rather as courtiers than as ascetics. Here Abailard was disgusted with the indiscipline and immorality around him. For peace and quiet, he procured transference to a cell in Champagne, and hither pupils began

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again to flock round him. But this brought him into conflict with his old master Roscellinus, who now accused him of heresy in his book on the Trinity. Two other rivals then stepped in. They persuaded the Papal Legate and the Archbishop of Reims to hold a council at Soissons, where he was condemned practically unheard (1121). One of the passages to which most exception was taken turned out to be a quotation from St. Augustine. Abailard's pupil, Bérenger, has left a description of this famous assembly which, though obviously written in satirical exaggeration, cannot be dismissed as mere fiction. The bishops, he writes, dined not wisely but too well, they deserved that description from Persius's *Satires*

"Between one goblet and the next  
The fuddled Pontiffs con the sacred text" <sup>1</sup>

Therefore, in the Council Hall (wherein Abailard's doctrines were formally arraigned, and excerpts were read by one of the accusers),

"Wherever anything of subtle divinity was read, such as these Bishops were not wont to hear, all those hearers were cut to the heart and gnashed with their teeth upon Abailard, and, turning their mole's eyes upon the Philosopher, they cried 'Shall we suffer this monster to live?' Then they wagged their heads like the Jews, saying 'Vah! here is he who destroyeth the Temple of God!'. Thus do these purblind folk judge his words, thus doth their drunkenness judge his soberness: thus do these wordy cross-pots dispute against the mouthpiece of the Trinity. The heat of the wine had so crept into their brain, that all eyes were melting into the lethargy of sleep. Meanwhile the reader drones forth, and the hearers snore. One leaneth on his elbow, that his eyes may close in sleep, another seeketh repose for his eyelids upon a soft

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<sup>1</sup> Inter pocula quaerunt  
Pontifices saturni quid dia poemata narrent

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cushion, a third slumbereth with his head upon his knees. So, when the reader had found something thorny enough in Abailard's book, he cried aloud to the deaf ears of the Bishops: 'Do ye condemn?'—*damnatis*? Then some, awakening barely at the last syllable, would say with sleepy voice and hanging head *Damnatus*. Others, aroused by the tumult of these condemners, cutting off the first syllable, murmured—*Namus*. Thus it is that foxes have their holes, and birds their nests, but Abailard hath not where to lay his head."

The point on which Abailard was finally condemned was that he had presumed to lecture upon the Trinity "without authorization from the Roman Pontiff or from the Church." His book was publicly burned, and himself put under custody at the abbey of St Médard, until public opinion procured his transference to St Denis again.

Here, however, his difficulties arose again from his superiority over the rest of his fellows. The monks had for generations identified their patron saint with that Dionysius the Areopagite who discussed with St Paul, and who was credited with conversion to Christianity and with the authorship of the books on the Celestial and Ecclesiastical Hierarchies. Abailard discovered in Bede a passage which seemed destructive of the identification of this great figure with the Dionysius, Bishop of Paris, whom the monks revered as their founder, and whose bones they had lately translated with unheard-of pomp and enthusiasm. His brethren denounced him in a solemn session of the Chapter, and there was further danger of proceedings before the king, the abbey's special patron. Later, Abailard found specious reasons for retracting this untimely criticism, but, for the moment, his best resource was in flight. As before, he chose Champagne, made his peace with the new abbot of St Denis, the statesmanlike Suger, and was allowed to

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settle in what he himself describes as a "solitude" in the neighbourhood of Troyes. There, with one companion, he set up a hut of wattles and thatch, and thither he was followed by a crowd of pupils, as of old. They built their own huts round him, and he consecrated the whole encampment in the name of the Paraclete, that Comforter who had sustained him through all his tribulations.

About 1125 he seized the opportunity of retirement, and accepted the abbacy of St. Gildas in his native Brittany. Here, however, he found himself confronted with even worse indiscipline and immorality than at St Denis. When he attempted to control his flock, they plotted against his life. His one comfort now was in Héloïse again. She had become Prioress of Argenteuil; but that convent had been absorbed by St Denis, and the nuns dispersed. Abailard offered them his own deserted buildings of the Paraclete, Bishop and Pope confirmed this grant, and thenceforward Abailard became their director, visiting frequently and supporting Héloïse with his spiritual counsel. Meanwhile he was active in collecting or revising his own writings, and he began again to lecture at Ste Geneviève, just outside the walls of Paris, where is now the centre of the Quartier Latin. John of Salisbury took counsel with him in 1136; a young beginner with a revered master. Arnold of Brescia had been his pupil at an earlier date, and in 1139 this bold religious and political rebel attached himself again to his old master. This brought Abailard into a prominence possibly unwelcome, and certainly dangerous for here begins the supreme tragedy of his life.

We have seen how all his proceedings had been in many ways irregular

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Although in those days irregularities were so frequent that they might almost be called regular, yet they always offered a handle to the adversary. Thus Abailard had two classes of inevitable adversaries; the jealous rival and the zealous champion of conservative ecclesiastical tradition. The former had done their worst at Soissons, the latter now came forward in far more formidable indignation. These were St Norbert, founder of the Premonstratensian Order, and St Bernard, to whom his pupil Eugenius III was able to say, a few years later than this, "men say that you are Pope, and not I." This clash between Bernard and Abailard is one of the saddest things of its kind in history, it is as painful as the conflict between Tyndale and St Thomas More. Bernard was truly great in his charity. Dante's unerring touch singles this out as his main characteristic "la vivace carità di colui." But *caritas* in medieval theology and philosophy connotes love of God even before love of our neighbour, in so far as the two can be separated. To all men St. Bernard could be all things except unorthodox, and in Abailard's spirit he, like so many of the best men of his time, scented unorthodoxy. He represented the third of the great forces in twelfth-century thought. The school of Chartres we have seen, strong in its grasp of the best classical authors then available. Next, this school of dialecticians, among whom Abailard was now the most prominent champion. Thirdly, the old-fashioned conservative theologians, far stronger in mystic contemplation than in philosophy, whose school, in so far as they formed a school, was in the convent of St Victor at Paris. These, with St. Bernard, are the true ancestors of the *Imitatio Christi*.

To this school Abailard's great fault seemed that of pre-

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sumption the frank application of reason to the oracles of God As St. Bernard writes in the strongest of his accusing letters, "the secrets of God are ripped open . . . The Fathers are insulted by men who, instead of understanding them, treat them as contradictories to be reconciled. [Abailard] sees nothing through a glass darkly, but stares at everything face to face" St Bernard, moving publicly against Arnold of Brescia, attacked Abailard also Abailard appealed to the Archbishop of Sens. The king was to visit Sens that Whitsuntide; a Church Council could be held in his presence, and this would practically be a duel between the two great adversaries. Bernard was long unwilling, but his followers pressed him, and he consented The Council opened, it began with the formal recitation of Abailard's heresies then "by a sudden revulsion of feeling, a failure of courage or a flash of certainty that the votes of the Council were already secured—perhaps, that the excited populace would rise against him—he appealed from that tribunal to the sovereign judgment of the Roman Pontiff, and quitted the assembly" So concludes Dr. Poole in his admirable study, and yet we may perhaps go a little further The study of St. Bernard's life and character—and no man so distant from us in time has had so many and trustworthy biographers, checked by so much collateral evidence—reveals how he arrived at that almost miraculous influence which he often exercised over men His single object was the salvation of souls, as all men understood salvation at that time. To this end he had devoted the advantages of noble birth and striking personal beauty and high intellectual gifts. he had tamed his body with the strictest asceticism, and had shown, at every crisis of his life, conspicuous



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courage. He might well have hesitated to engage in dialectical duel this greatest dialectician of his own or many past generations. But here he was at last ; and Abailard could not have been unconscious of his own weak points. He was a sincere believer in the main Christian doctrines,<sup>1</sup> and he was true philosopher enough to realize that in the long run, character weighs heavier in human life than pure intellect. Even before the justest tribunal he might have had serious qualms , and at Sens his nerves might well have broken down under the warning of dangers without and conscience within.

On the road to Rome he rested at Cluny, and was there welcomed by Peter the Venerable, St Bernard's friend. Peter himself, in his letter to Héloïse, paid striking testimony to the two years spent under his care by this "servant of Christ, and verily Christ's philosopher."

"Often," (he wrote) "I marvelled, as the brethren walked past me, to see a man so great and famous thus despise and abase himself. He was abstemious in food and drink, refusing and condemning all but the bare necessities. He was assiduous in study, frequent in prayer, always silent unless compelled to answer the question of some brother or to expound sacred themes before us. He, who was known throughout the world by the fame of his teaching, entered this school of Him who said *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart*, and, continuing meek and lowly, he passed, as we may believe, unto Him."

They had moved him to Châlon-sur-Saône for health in 1142, and there he died.

Not only De Wulf, but some other historians of philosophy, deny him much originality. Yet when Rashdall, in conversation with Fr. Denifle, suggested that Abailard

<sup>1</sup> For testimony on this point, see Poole, pp 145, 173ff

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might be regarded, on the whole, as the greatest thinker of the Middle Ages, the great Dominican was not disposed to a definite contradiction. Originality, after all, is not absolutely identical with novelty independence is perhaps a still more important factor. It may be that he was not first in any field, except in this doctrine of the Atonement, but the man's whole attitude must be taken into account. There is much real originality in simply borrowing the right thing instead of the wrong, among so many ideas which are put before us, to an extent which distinguishes us from other less accurate choosers. Still more, in assimilating that which we borrow, and, most of all, in making the thing assimilated comprehensible to the world in general. The first who took a dormant seed and made it fruitful may claim an originality of his own.

A good common-sense test of a thinker's greatness may be found in comparing contemporary judgments with those of posterity. To have shocked one's own age, and impressed succeeding ages, is a testimonial which cannot be ignored. And, however mistaken it is to regard Abailard as the champion of pure reason against obscurantist piety, he did unquestionably startle his own age on more points than one.

First, on the doctrine of the Atonement. St. Paul goes into no precise details, and the early Fathers were hypnotized by legalistic ideas, a sort of lawsuit between God and the Devil, in which justice demanded a price for the redemption of man's soul, and no ransom but Christ's blood could fully satisfy the demand. Anselm removed it one step from this cold legalism by representing it as a struggle between God's justice and His mercy. Abailard, for the first time, cast legalism to the

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winds. God's revelation is not *externa manifestatio* but *interna inspiratio*. His redemption consists in this, that His love commands our love, and thus redeems us from sin. This is admirably brought out by Rashdall in his *Doctrine and Development* (p. 134).

"The attack on the received theology had been begun by [one of the greatest of medieval saints] the decisive victory was won by Abailard. Seldom has a theological system crumbled to pieces so rapidly, so completely, and so irrevocably. Abailard's timid disciple, Peter the Lombard, is the last important writer to maintain this [early patristic] theory of a ransom paid to Satan. And, among all that crop of strange and terrible theories of the atonement which sprang up at and after the Reformation, the old patristic view has, I believe, never been revised."

In the question of Universals, Abailard approached very nearly to that theory of Conceptualism which has found most favour with later philosophers—the solution given by Aristotle, but not handed down by Porphyry, and therefore unknown in the West until the complete Aristotle came in through Arab translators. Universals exist not *before* the thing (Realism) nor *after* the thing (Nominalism), but *in* the thing—*universalia non ante rem, nec post rem, sed in re*. They have a real existence, but only in particular things. Aquinas, who cleared this and stated it in the form which became classical, practically followed the Arab Avicenna, who gave the example of the sculptor and his statue. Existing things in this world stand to God as the statue stands to the sculptor's mind; it already exists there *subjectively*, but needs material to make it *objective*.

Of all Abailard's condemned doctrines the least defensible was his "Nihilianism," or "Nihilism," concerning the person of Christ. Yet this doctrine was

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followed by his disciple Peter Lombard ; and Pope Alexander III , who finally condemned it in Peter Lombard, had himself taught it in his earlier days.

Of far greater importance was Abailard's contribution to the future fortunes of Scholasticism, the book he called *Yes and No—Sic et Non*, *sic* being father to the French, Italian, and Spanish *si*. The idea was not absolutely new : his own master Anselm of Laon had composed a similar book , but Abailard's was far more thorough and bolder . He was willing, at the Church's bidding, to keep within the traditional limits of Christian philosophy , yet he saw clearly that, even within those boundaries, nothing really effective could be done without pioneer axe-work through this jungle of authorities . Therefore he collected and confronted a whole series of apparently contradictory texts as a basis for reasonable discussion . This it was which roused the indignation of Bernard and the Victorines, and must have contributed greatly to his condemnation, though it was not brought explicitly into court. Yet this, the main stone of offence, was in fact the point on which posterity most triumphantly justified him . The whole procedure of Scholastic philosophy, after his death, rested upon this very system . His disciple Peter Lombard, by making a similar collection and adding at each point some attempted reconciliation, not always convincing or satisfactory, earned undying fame as Master of the Sentences . Aquinas, Bonaventura, all the greatest Scholastics, began by writing formal commentaries on Peter's *Sentences* , and Roger Bacon complained, with some exaggeration, that the book was ousting the Bible from its first place in the schools. If Newman could boast the severe rationalism of medieval scholastic

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studies, this was in testimony to Abailard and in the teeth of St. Bernard

Seldom as a little book of this kind can afford to give long quotations, this *Sic et Non* is so epoch-making in itself, and so characteristic of the whole man, that I must quote here from Abailard's Preface

"Seeing that, amid so great a multitude of words, some sayings of the saints seem not only to show discrepancy but even contradiction, we must not rashly judge concerning those men by whom the world itself will be judged (as it is written 'The Saints shall judge this world' ) Neither let us presume to rebuke those men, or condemn them as mistaken, to whom the Lord hath said 'He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me'

"Let us therefore, reflecting upon our own weakness, believe that we ourselves rather lack grace in understanding than that they lacked it in writing Since Truth Himself said unto them 'For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you' Why therefore should we marvel if, since that Spirit is absent from us whereby these things were written and said and instilled into those writers, we ourselves should lack the understanding thereof? For we are specially hindered therefrom by the unwonted fashion of speech, and, oftentimes, by the diverse significations for the same words whereby the same sound will stand sometimes for one signification, or again for another For, as each aboundeth in his own sense, so also in his own words And since (as Tully saith) in all matters identity begetteth satiety, that is, weariness, therefore it is right sometimes to vary the words themselves even in the same matter, and not to reveal all things in vulgar and common words, which matters, as St Austin saith, are covered lest they should grow vile, and become all the more pleasant in proportion as they need greater zeal of investigation and are more hardly won

"Who seeth not how rash it is for one man to judge of another's sense and understanding? For it is to God alone that our hearts and thoughts are open To this also we must carefully attend, lest, when any of the sayings of the Saints are objected to us, as contradicting, or as alien from the truth, we ourselves be deceived by a false title or by the corruption of the text itself For oftentimes

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apocryphal writings pass under the name and authority of Saints , moreover, even in the very Scriptures of the Holy Testaments are corrupted through fault of the copyists [St Jerome himself warns us of this, pointing out how Ps lxxvii (lxxviii , A V ) is ascribed to Asaph in its title, yet St Matthew quotes it as Isaiah's , how, again, St Matthew and St Mark give different hours of the day for the Crucifixion , again, how Matthew xxvii 9 ascribes to Jeremiah words which in fact are from Zechariah ] What wonder, therefore, seeing that some things even in the Gospels have been corrupted by the ignorance of copyists, the same thing should come to pass sometimes in the writings of later Fathers, which are of far less authority .

“ Nor should we, methinks, pay less attention whether these things which are alleged from the writings of the Saints be such as either they themselves have retracted (as St Austin did in many matters), or have said rather according to the opinion of others than to their own [Of this he gives several examples] Again, even in the Gospels some things seem to be said in accordance rather with men's opinion than with truth of fact, as when Joseph is called Christ's father even by the Lord's mother, according to the manner and opinion of the multitude for she herself saith ‘ Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing ’ We ourselves, again, speaking by the preception of our eyes, call the heavens starry at one moment, and not at another sometimes we say that the sun is warm, and sometimes not , or, again, that the moon is shining more or less, or even that she hath no light whatsoever , yet these things, in themselves, remain perpetually equal, albeit they appear not equally unto us Although, in the whole world, there be not any place completely void, not filled with air or with any corporeal substance, yet we call a chest utterly void when our eye findeth nought therein What wonder, then, if the holy Fathers themselves have sometimes said, or even written, some things according to opinion rather than to truth ? ”

Moreover, inspiration has not always been continuous :

“ This is proved through plain examples by St Gregory in his first Homily on Ezekiel, who notes that even the very Chief of the Apostles, who shone with so many gifts of God's grace and with miracles (and this, after that special effusion which our Lord had promised of the Holy Ghost, to teach His disciples all truth) fell into error concerning the continued observation of circumcision and of

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certain ancient rites, and, when his fellow-Apostle Paul had corrected him gravely and soundly in public, was not ashamed to desist from his pernicious simulation "

Yet we have a safe refuge in the Canonical books of the Old and New Testament

" There, if anything seems absurd, we must not say that the author of that book held not to the truth , but either the manuscript is faulty, or the translator hath erred, or thou lackest understanding [St Jerome] speaketh of the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as tools,<sup>1</sup> and saith that it is heretical to assent that any thing in these dissents from the truth For (saith Jerome) if even complaisant falsehoods (*officiosa mendacia*) have been admitted into Holy Scripture, what authority will be left in them ? All will be subject to the liberty of private interpretation We must distinguish, as Jerome does, between the Canonical and the Deutero-Canonical books [*i.e.* those which, after many centuries of discussion, the Council of Trent finally decreed to be inspired, while other Churches have insisted on Jerome's distinction] But, within the certainly Canonical books, there is no distinction for instance, ' what Paul saith, Christ saith ' With the Fathers, it is true, we may be critical, for we must weigh not the prejudged opinion of the Doctor but the reason of his doctrine, as it is written ' Prove all things , hold fast that which is good ' Yet this is said of the commentators, not of the Canonical Scriptures, whereunto it is right to give implicit faith

" Therefore this present collection is made, as a basis for discussion in the schools, after the fashion recommended by Aristotle to all serious students For by doubting we come to enquiry, and through enquiry we grasp the truth, as the Truth Himself hath said ' Seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you ' "

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<sup>1</sup> *Instrumenta* , Erasmus also entitled his New Testament *Novum Instrumentum*

## CHAPTER X

### AVERROISM

RENAN points out the singular fortune of the Arab philosopher Ibn-Roschid, known to western Europe as Averroes. This Mohammedan became infinitely better known outside than inside his own communion, and Christendom adopted him as the leader, if not actual creator, of a system of thought which in fact he did scarcely more than summarize. Yet in one way, at least, he deserved this fortune by his immense diligence. For his numerous writings he used ten thousand sheets of paper, and his industry was regulated by a sound critical faculty.

He was born in 1126 and died in 1198, so that his life roughly fills the twelfth century. He is not the greatest of Arab philosophers, but the latest, who summed up the work of his predecessors, and was imported into Christendom for that very reason, since his works contained a full discussion of all the problems which had occupied previous thinkers. To quote Renan again, he is .

“as it were the Boethius of Arab philosophy, one of those late-comers who atone for lack of originality by the encyclopædic character of their works . . . one of those last representatives of a dying civilization, who have the unexpected good fortune that their name becomes attached for ever to that wreckage of culture which they only summarized”



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This Arab culture in Spain lasted, in all, some two centuries. The Khalif Al-Hakem II, who reigned at Cordova from 961 to 976, is said to have collected a library of 400,000 volumes, at a time when there was probably not 10,000 elsewhere in Europe · possibly not even 4,000. He encouraged not only Muslim scholars, but Jewish and Christian also. But his son's throne was usurped by a man who destroyed a great part of this library to curry favour with the priests and the populace. The volumes which survived this violence were gradually dispersed or destroyed. Yet, by the middle of the eleventh century, philosophy had revived in Spain, and, though the philosophers were often persecuted, there was a succession of great men until the end of the twelfth century. Their persecution was due to the fact that their theories conflicted as much with Mohammedan as with Christian orthodoxy; so that we find Averroes provoked into writing "Of all tyrannies, the worst is the tyranny of the priest." His own talents and attainments made his fortune in the world. He was Khadi, or judge, of Cordova, but a chance discussion led him to speak disrespectfully of one of the stories in the Koran, and he found himself cashiered and disgraced, for the time at least. Many others shared his fate, the orthodox drove the philosophers away from the Court. For at this time there was a strong orthodox reaction throughout Islam, not unlike that later reaction of orthodoxy in Christendom which was marked by the Council of Trent. Moreover, this reaction was thoroughly popular, the philosophers had always been unpopular in Islam. Among the upper classes, many cultivated philosophy and science with enthusiasm. But the multitude hated and persecuted all

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who were marked as devotees of learning, with the result, as Averroes tells us, that crude superstition alternated with crude unbelief. "The vulgar," he writes, "form their opinions by mere habit ; therefore their faith is more insistent than that of the philosopher , since they are not, like him, accustomed to hear it contradicted And that is why we often see men who, plunging suddenly into speculative science, lose that religious faith which, after all, was a mere habit, and become unbelievers Therefore " (he concludes) " philosophical discussion is only for the few, the enlightened The many must not only be permitted to believe, but even forced to believe, if necessary " Thus Averroes, though himself a heretic, here defends openly the punishment of mere vulgar heretics, as men who do more harm than good The Emperor Frederick II , as we shall see, was of this same mind , and it is far from unknown among us to-day This life testifies to the eternal difficulty of reconciling institutional religion with scientific research Here is that Mohammedan creed, so simple and elementary that, as Gibbon puts it, a philosophic atheist may subscribe to it without much strain upon his conscience Yet scientific scepticism was as unpopular in twelfth-century Islam as in Christendom , and the precocious culture of this Moorish kingdom withered away under disfavour and persecution In a sense, it had never been at home there , it was ancient Greek and Persian culture transported bodily to Spain Thus, though these scholars were ahead of their Christian counterparts until the twelfth century, yet scholarship was never a national institution

"The Muslim philosopher always remained an amateur or a Court functionary When, therefore, the sovereigns were intimi-

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dated by fanaticism, philosophy disappeared the manuscripts were destroyed by royal decree, and Christendom alone remembered that Islam had possessed scholars and thinkers Arab philosophy furnishes an almost unique example of a very lofty culture suppressed almost instantaneously without leaving any trace behind, so that it was almost forgotten by the nation which had given it birth" [Renan]

Averroes was a fervent worshipper of Aristotle, to Dante he is "the Commentator" *par excellence*—*Averrois, che il gran comento feo* St. Thomas paid him the compliment of imitating his method in his own commentaries But Christian and Arab alike, naturally enough, often introduced their own thought, and invented where they believed themselves to be explaining Thus Averroes, dealing with mere vague hints and *obiter dicta* in Aristotle, developed a theory of the universe far more mechanical and materialistic than his master's. He so emphasized the universality of the human intellect as practically to deny the individual soul "The soul is not divided among different individuals, it is the same in Socrates and in Plato, it has no individuality" The only reality is the world-soul, the common reason of humanity Humanity is eternal, but the individual perishes, there is no personal immortality. Again, he held the eternity of matter with a firmness which was irreconcilable with the idea of Creation Nothing can be made out of nothing the material universe always has existed and always will, however kaleidoscopic may be its transformations from age to age Those are the points on which Averroism came into crudest conflict with Christian thought, though there are naturally also theological points upon which Christian orthodoxy differs from Muslim These were often heightened by the

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crudely anthropomorphic terms in which the Christians frequently expressed themselves. "God," said the Arabs, "has no Mother God is neither begetter nor begotten", and thence they passed on to insist that God can be described only in terms of negation So also John the Scot had insisted, and so does the Hindu of to-day.

Despite all this, the influence of Averroes on Christian thought was immense. In Spain there had always been such interaction, especially in the tenth century under Al Hakem II The priest Alvarez of Cordova (850) reproached his fellow-Christians with their preference for Arab speech and Arab books "They neglect their Bible for the Muslim Scriptures" The Troubadours owed much to the example of Arab poetry, and French Chivalry to that of their Arab opponents in Spain. It is startling to find in Averroes a plea for the emancipation of women, for which we must wait until the fourteenth century in the Frenchman Dubois and the English Ockham

"Women differ from men not in quality, but in degree Sometimes they surpass them the example of certain African States shows their aptitude for war, and there would be nothing extraordinary in their attaining to the government of the State Among sheep-dogs, does not the female guard the flock just as well as the male "

The Jews adopted Arab philosophy enthusiastically ; and these, being the busiest traders and travellers, rapidly spread Averroes and his fellow-commentators over France and Italy. Their introduction marks an epoch in university philosophy. We can trace this in the official prohibitions At Paris, from 1210 onwards, this new knowledge was prohibited , but we shall see in a succeed-

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ing chapter how it had come to stay William of Auvergne, Bishop of Paris in the middle of the century, devoted the greater part of his very remarkable writings to their refutation He complained that "many men swallow their conclusions, accepting them without investigation by debate or criticism, consenting to them as proved and certain" In 1269 the Bishop of Paris publicly condemned thirteen Averroistic doctrines, including the denial of God's Providence, of Creation, and of Immortality Aquinas complained about the same time that this teaching lurked in corners and addressed itself chiefly to the unfledged youth, but an Averroist would doubtless have answered that, if the orthodox wanted free and open discussion, they must first manage to muzzle the Inquisition In 1277, three years after St. Thomas's death, came a similar batch of condemned propositions, including three still more offensive—that the theologians' writings are based upon mere fables, that Christianity, like other religions, contains fictions and falsehoods, and, in short, that it is an impediment to true knowledge Moreover, there crept in now the doctrine—or shall we call it the subterfuge—of the Double Truth Averroes took pains to distinguish between revealed truth in the Koran, and philosophic truth, shed by the light of human reason Like the vast majority of those who came after him, both in Islam and in Christendom, he taught that, in cases of absolute conflict, Revelation must prevail But the care with which he distinguished between these two fields gave rise to the suspicion, just or unjust, that he was willing to cut the knot by pleading that a thing may be philosophically true, though theologically false, or vice versa Certainly that tendency begins to show itself at Paris

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among those who had to lecture and to discuss under strict and minute episcopal supervision ; and, more or less furtively no doubt, it became a salve for sore consciences in the Schools. It is probably this which explains a striking episode at Oxford in the days of the Lollard controversy. A preacher said from the pulpit that there was no idolatry like the idolatry of the Mass, and it was complained against the Chancellor that he contented himself with observing " Now you are speaking as a philosopher."

Thus there were numerous thinkers—far more, of course, than we shall ever know by documentary evidence—as definitely sceptical as in the eighteenth century or in our own day. They held that Philosophy has a realm of her own, with which Theology has no right to interfere. They contended that Christianity must be judged by the same standard as other religions, and that the wise man will not commit himself too deeply to any. And it is about this time that there grew up the legend of the Three Impostors. There was a saying attributed to Averroes that Moses, Christ, and Mohammed had equally deluded the world. Then, in 1239, Gregory IX publicly accused the Emperor Frederick II of having uttered the same sentiment. Presently it was rumoured that a book had been written on this theme, various authors were named. Frederick, his secretary Pier delle Vigne, or Boccaccio, or more than a dozen others. The legend has this basis of fact, that Averroism was not killed by being driven underground. Dante fills a whole circle of his *Inferno* with those who denied the Immortality of the Soul. Petrarch, a generation later, tells us " Modern philosophers are wont to think they have done nothing if they fail to bark against Christ and His supernatural

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teaching " they call Christ an idiot, and the defenders of Christianity fools Such talk, he complains, was fashionable among the upper classes of Venice , but its main focus was at the University of Padua This had become a hotbed of Averroism, especially in the medical school It was thus that the famous proverb grew up which Sir Thomas Browne takes as his text · *Ubi tres medici, duo ather* About Petrarch's time, in 1340, one Nicholas of Autrecourt, "the medieval Hume," was condemned at Paris for a series of theses plainly inspired by Averroes, though he fulminated against those who "study Aristotle and Averroes unto their dotage, abandoning for their logical studies all ethical questions and all care for the common weal , while, if some friend of truth arises and sounds a trumpet-note to rouse these slumberers from their sleep, they are indignant, and seize their weapons for a fight to the death against him " Upon which Professor Gilson comments "Not only the ideas of the Renaissance, but even its tone announces itself as early as the 14th century in these condemned propositions of Nicholas d'Autrecourt " He tried to shelter himself behind the "vulpine excuse " that, though reason seemed to proclaim the impossibility of the Christian doctrine of the Last Judgment, we should "adhere meanwhile to Christ's law, and believe that rewards and punishments take place as Holy Writ tells us " He recanted all his errors, and died as Dean of Metz , but we may fairly wonder how far the Dean's private beliefs differed from those of the Paris lecturer

Meanwhile Averroism spread throughout Italy. By the beginning of the sixteenth century it had crept forth from the obscurity in which medieval hostility had compelled it to lurk, and had become, as Renan puts it,

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“ almost the official philosophy of Italy in general ” In those days the Immortality of the Soul was openly discussed even at the Papal Court , but then that pope was Leo X. By this time, Averroism was merged in the general current of Renaissance scepticism, and we need pursue it no further



## CHAPTER XI

### THE UNIVERSITIES

BETWEEN 1175 and 1200 the inevitable crystallization came about the age of itinerant teachers gave place to the age of settled scholastic corporations *Universitas*, already in Classical Latin, was frequently used for a gild of any kind. The *Universitates* of the Middle Ages were scholastic gilds, deeply influenced by the already existing societies of traders or artificers. It is impossible, in the light of present evidence, to decide which grew up first, Bologna or Paris, but it was the latter which finally obtained unrivalled importance. Bologna, owing to special circumstances, inverted the usual gild constitution the students governed it, and the teachers were its hired servants. Paris, which was followed by the majority of later universities, kept the traditional principle. Apprenticeship there, as in the artificers' gilds, lasted seven years. The student, midway in his course, became a *bachelor*, answering to the *journeyman* among artificers. Just as the latter, while continuing to learn, was paid a little for his work, so the former became pupil-teacher. Then, at the end of the seven years, the student or the gild-man passed Master, and was formally invested with the master's cap. On the one hand, we may see the artificer-master's cap on such an ancient monument as the tomb of Hugues Libergier in Reims Cathedral, on

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the other, Scottish universities still confirm the new graduate's title by the investiture of the cap.

By about 1300 the lawyers had excogitated a theory by which no university could be founded save by a pope or a sovereign. But in fact all the earliest grew up by natural crystallization, and the lawyers had to make room for them by admitting that valid creation might come by long custom—*ex consuetudine*. Of the fourteen existing universities in 1300, only three had been founded by princes and two by popes (one of which was from moneys taken from the Count of Toulouse). The remaining nine had all grown up *ex consuetudine*. The thirst for knowledge could no longer be satisfied by old, haphazard, hierarchical methods—the teacher and the scholar must now have their own trade unions.

Though the popes had so little to do with the actual foundation of universities, yet they soon recognized the potentialities of the movement and took it in hand. In the inevitable quarrels which arose between townsfolk and students everywhere—inevitable in face of the crude clash of interests—it was always the latter who could count upon papal support. But it will be best to trace papal influence in the studies, and here we can follow Averroism much further than in Chapter XIII.

The first movements were prohibitory, in face of this flood of translations from Aristotle and commentaries which was coming in from the Arabs. In 1210 the Council of Paris forbade all teaching of Aristotle's natural history, in text or in commentary. In 1215 the papal Legate renewed this prohibition. In 1231 Gregory IX, St. Francis's friend, intervened in person: the *Physics* of Aristotle are forbidden, but only "until they have been censored and purged of error" by a com-

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mission which he appointed. The commissioners seem to have come to no result, but things took their own course. Aristotle's *Physics* and *Metaphysics* soaked quietly in. Innocent IV forbade them for the University of Toulouse (1245), and Urban IV repeated this (1263), but such efforts were hopelessly belated. St Thomas Aquinas's friend, Guillaume de Moerbeke, set himself to translate methodically from the Greek text, thus supplying material far more trustworthy than the Arab-Latin versions hitherto current; and Aristotle with his commentators came so irresistibly that, after a century of papal silence, Rome at last made it compulsory that the candidate for an Arts degree should have studied the long-forbidden treatise of Aristotle.

This fear had doubtless been based mainly upon the Averroistic commentaries. But it was found quite impossible, in practice, to suppress these, their fascination was overwhelming. Significant is the case of Siger de Brabant, whom Dante puts in his Heaven, but whom the Bishop of Paris, constitutional guardian of the university, condemned solemnly in 1277. Siger taught some of the most distinctive Averroistic doctrines: his philosophy was based entirely on Aristotle and Averroes. He held (among others) the belief, which was held later by Vico and by Nietzsche, that all things come round to their first beginnings: history is an Eternal Return. Confessedly, these doctrines were on many points irreconcilable with those of the Church. But here Siger takes a position not easily distinguishable from that which later medieval freethinkers sometimes adopted: the principle of the Double Truth. The philosopher's business is to follow the light of reason: when this contradicts faith he must accept the orthodox faith,

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yet he must still insist that reason says the contrary. St Thomas Aquinas, in his treatise against Averroism, insisted upon the logical absurdity of this attitude, and we may naturally doubt how far Siger himself was sincere. It is true that, in all ages, there have been minds, sometimes exceptionally penetrating and consistent in other matters, which have kept a watertight compartment between reason and faith. But seldom or never has the contrast been so crude as in this case, and, when we remember that in Siger's day public infidelity led directly to the stake, then it is difficult to acquit him of that paradox which was destined to serve others in face of the Inquisition—that a thing may be philosophically true and theologically false, or vice versa.

The real antidote to Averroism, in so far as the universities were able to find one, was to turn the heretic's own weapons against himself. Averroes was a very great systematizer, his doctrine was exceptionally consistent within its own limits, and therefore showed extraordinary vitality. Therefore Albert the Great, and his greater pupil St Thomas, set themselves to construct a system equally perfect but more orthodox. Instead of keeping Aristotle at arm's length, they seized upon him and devoted all their energies to reconciling his main doctrines with Christian dogma. They acted in the spirit of Gregory IX, who, in his rescript to Paris University in 1236, had invoked the time-honoured doctrine of the Midianitish Captive in Deuteronomy **xxi 2**—“She shall shave her head and pare her nails . . . and after that she shall be thy wife.” From this union, thus legitimized, sprang that Scholastic Theology which made Paris the great thinking-shop of Europe for two centuries or more. Its growth was immensely

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helped by the rise of the Mendicant Orders, especially the Franciscan and Dominican. For here were men vowed primarily to a life of poverty and self-denial and piety, to whom the marriage of Philosophy and Theology appealed as one of the loftiest possible ideals. The earlier dialecticians of Paris had often been men like Siger de Brabant, clerks in Minor Orders, who taught for their living, were mainly interested in Philosophy, and just conformed passively to Theology whenever she laid her hand upon them. Thomas of Cantimpré, an early Dominican, characterizes such men in terms which need no more than discount for professional jealousy. The most popular often became wealthy, luxurious, and finally idle, while they were ready to dispute on either side at the bidding of profit or caprice. Face to face with such men, the Friars were in deadly earnest, they began to take the universities by storm, and papal protection, next to the quarrels between Town and Gown, was most often needed to defend these new intruders against the repressive measures of the old-fashioned uncloistered masters.<sup>1</sup> It was a papal decree which, in 1256, appointed the Dominican Thomas Aquinas and the Franciscan Bonaventura to professorships at Paris. One fact, however, may be noted here. After those two great men, no Italian teacher was ever in the first theological rank at Paris or elsewhere. Marsilius alone was their rival in intellect and distinction, and he was a Doctor of Medicine, devastatingly critical of the time-honoured Parisian conclusions. It would seem that the Renaissance spirit,

<sup>1</sup> It is only towards the end of the Middle Ages that any distinction begins to appear between the three terms Master, Professor, and Doctor. Thus the Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) was the same as the Master of (Liberal) Arts.

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which arose earlier in Italy than elsewhere, turned the Italian genius into other directions than scholastic theology. After one brilliant generation, the successors seem to have lost their taste for such studies. No mediæval university in Italy had a great theological school; perhaps Rome least of all. From Aquinas and Bonaventura forward, the two "Student Orders" (as Roger Bacon calls them, in sharp contradistinction from the older cloisterers who followed the Rule of St. Benedict or St. Augustine) supplied nearly all the great names in Scholasticism.

Alexander of Hales (Franciscan, d. about 1245) seems to have been the first to utilize the whole works of Aristotle, as they had flowed in from the Arabs. But his main tendencies were inherited from St. Augustine, that is, ultimately from Plato. His pupil St. Bonaventura (d. 1274) was equally Augustinian. The early Dominicans, on the other hand, were predominantly Aristotelian both in spirit and in method. Albert the Great (1206-80) recognized the enormous value of Aristotle, if he could be harnessed to the service of Christian dogma. He set himself to enrich Latin thought with the whole body of knowledge accumulated by the Greeks and their Arab or Jewish pupils. He gave all this, not in the actual words of his originals, but as digested in his own mind, therefore Professor Gilson rightly maintains the judgment of Albert's own day, that this extraordinary encyclopædist must be classed as an original author. His monumental work formed a magnificent foundation for the still greater structure of his pupil St. Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274).

Thomas joined the Dominicans at the age of twenty, and began next year to study at Paris under Albert,

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following him to Cologne in 1248. In 1252 he was back in Paris, where he began to teach in 1256. From 1259 to 1269 he was teaching in different Italian cities, then again at Paris for three years, and at Naples in 1273. Next year he was summoned by Gregory X to the Council of Lyons, but died on the way.

Like Hales, Bonaventura, and so many others, he began his teaching by a commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. The last portion of his great *Sum of Theology*, which he had not lived to finish, is appropriated from that commentary. That work in itself testifies to enormous intellectual power and industry, but the mass of other work which he succeeded in completing during little more than twenty years of literary life is almost incredible, even when we remember how much he was able to borrow directly from Albert. The most remarkable of all, in some ways, in his *Sum against the Heathen*, in which he deals with Natural Theology. Faith and Reason, Theology and Philosophy are separate things, yet the orthodox philosopher must set himself to reconcile them. He must accept the dogmas of his Church as revealed truths, not entirely penetrable by our minds, but imposing themselves on our belief even where we cannot comprehend them. Rightly followed, neither Reason nor Revelation can deceive us, for both come from God, but, wherever philosophy concludes in a direction contrary to faith, it must be wrong. The dogma must be true, it is for Reason, at this point, to criticize herself and discover her own error. Yet there is a wide domain of truth common to both, and the Christian philosopher will use both as freely as possible, working upwards from Reason to Faith, and downwards from Faith to Reason. Thus it is in St. Thomas's book

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of Natural Religion, the *Sum against the Heathen*, that he displays the qualities most admired by modern philosophers. Here he undertakes to show systematically how far Revelation is supported by Reason, and, incidentally, the points where pure Reason has nothing to tell us either for or against. Professor A. E. Taylor has brought out the philosophical greatness of St. Thomas on those points in particular. On the great point at issue between Averroism and orthodoxy, the Creation, St. Thomas frankly admits that Reason can decide neither for nor against, and we have therefore only Revelation to assure us. Again, in spite of all temptation, he rejects Anselm's ontological proof of God's existence as insufficient, as resting upon a realism too extreme. It is in this book, and in his separate treatise against the Averroist, that he shows the perfection of his strictly philosophical qualities.

Far more bulky and better known, and more regularly studied by his own Church in succeeding generations, is his *Sum of All Theology*. Here he proceeds by the method suggested in Abailard's *Sic et Non*, and elaborated by Peter Lombard with his commentators. St. Thomas pursues his subject, article by article, with an orderly method and an encyclopædic thoroughness which leave nothing to be desired. First, he states the arguments and authorities which seem unfavourable to the particular thesis under discussion; then he confronts these with the favourable; next, he decides formally between them. But he does not stop here: he must not quit the subject until those unfavourable arguments or authorities, one by one, have been met or explained away—*solvuntur objecta*. Then at last may we turn to the thesis following next in logical order. The philosopher, therefore, plays



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every time four parts in succession plaintiff, defendant, judge, and court of appeal.

An early Provincial Minister was shocked to hear his Franciscan friars at Oxford disputing on the question, "whether God exists." St Thomas, within the first ten "quaestiones" of his *Summa Theologica*, feels called upon to discuss whether God exists, whether He be perfect, whether He be the Highest Good, whether He be infinite, whether He be eternal, and to solve all objections in each case before passing on.

All this was modelled upon the method of dialectical disputation in class which was natural to a comparatively bookless age. Even when the formal lecture had developed, and even in the law school where the pupils were what we should rather call research students, each of whom normally had his own text from which he could follow the lecturer, the method still remained fundamentally dialectical. Here, for instance, are the introductory words of Odofredus prefixed to his lectures on Roman Law at Bologna, about A.D. 1250

"First, I shall give you summaries of each *titulus* before I proceed to the text. Secondly, I shall give you as clear and explicit a statement as I can of the purport of each Law [included in the *titulus*]. Thirdly, I shall read the text with a view to correcting it. Fourthly, I shall briefly repeat the contents of the Law. Fifthly, I shall solve apparent contradictions, adding any general principles of Law to be extracted from that passage, and any distinctions or subtle and useful problems arising out of the Law, with their solutions, as far as the Divine Providence shall enable me."

At Paris, originally, the lecturer was bound by statute to go on "as though he were preaching a University sermon", or, in other words, "as though no man were writing before him". But a statute was passed in 1355

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against the abuse of dictating word by word. The offending lecturer was to be suspended for a year

“ And all students who impede the execution of this our present statute by shouting, whistling, stamping, stone-throwing, or any other device, whether by themselves or through the agency of their servants or abettors, are hereby cut off from our fellowship for one whole year ”

The passage is typical of University discipline , few medieval documents are more significant than the original statutes of some among our colleges

For the modern mind, the weakest side of scholastic philosophy was its submission to traditional authority. Paradoxes or wild aberrations might pass here and there, by favour or good fortune , but in general the way of truly free thought, as Plato and Aristotle had understood it, was the way to the stake. This was not the less operative because the scholar himself was often unconscious of it , because he himself shared the prejudices which so deeply affected his freedom. The two most intolerable limitations, as we should feel them, were, first, a bibliolatriy which, instead of losing force with time, had actually grown upon the Church , and, secondly, a crude eschatology which had sprung partly from that same source, and reacted upon it. The Bible (as men interpreted it) represented the Just God as dooming innumerable souls to an eternity of indescribable torment, physical and mental. Aquinas, one of the most moderate and balanced of all schoolmen, never doubted the contemporary conviction that the number of damned will far exceed that of the saved , and he describes hell-torments at greater length and with greater intensity than Calvin, who is often falsely credited with having

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invented what, in fact, he only inherited from the Middle Ages. We have thus a vicious circle. On the one hand, an inerrant Bible is our voucher for the plain truth about this hell, this eternity of torment amid the same material fire with which a modern philosopher lights his pipe, except that it is incalculably fiercer. On the other hand, this hell will be our inevitable fate if we doubt the inerrancy of this Bible. Medieval theology recognized four main lines of Bible interpretation: (1) the *historical* or the *literal*, (2) the *allegorical*, (3) the *tropological* or moral, and (4) the *anagogical*, leading the soul upwards to heaven. All four are intended by the Holy Ghost, the Author of these Scriptures, but, however we may stress the last, we must never neglect or question the literal sense. On this point St. Thomas Aquinas gives us the clearest view and the most exactly consonant with papal pronouncements down to the present day. According to him, the primary interpretation of Holy Writ must be the historical or literal. In this sense one word may, indeed, have different significations according to different contexts. But the literal sense is that which the Author intends, and the Author of Holy Writ is God. There can be no falsehood anywhere in the literal sense of Holy Scripture. We must, indeed, make allowance for certain obvious restrictions upon the theory of plenary inspiration: (1) the limitations of human language, especially at a remote period; (2) limitations imposed by the primitive mentality of the writer's contemporaries; and (3) the fact that figurative or allegorical language lends itself to misinterpretation by hasty or ignorant readers. But he insists that, wherever the *literal* sense conveys a *statement of fact*, that fact must not be questioned. He himself

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gives two instances "Those things which are said of [the Earthly] Paradise in Scripture are put before us by the method of historical narration But, in all things which Scripture thus hands down, we must hold to the truth of the story as our foundation, and fabricate our spiritual expositions upon that foundation" Thus (he continues), although the Tree of Life is also a spiritual idea (Prov. iii 18), yet there is also an actual Tree of Life growing to the present day in the Earthly Paradise—which Aquinas, of course, located as Dante did Again, in another section of the *Summa*, St Thomas exemplifies most significantly his view of what might be the literal statement of a passage Commenting on Exodus xxxiii 11, "And the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man is wont to speak to his friend," he says

"When Scripture states that He [the Lord] spoke to him [Moses], this is to be understood as expressing the opinion of the people who thought that Moses was speaking with God, mouth to mouth" God has not in fact a mouth, that word, taken literally, would be grossly anthropomorphic But where, for instance, we come across a clear statement of historical fact, that must not be questioned To deny that Elkanah was Samuel's father would be contrary to the Catholic Faith, "for it follows that the Divine Scripture would be false"

A couple of generations later, William of Ockham dealt with the same point He had many reasons for differing from St Thomas, not only as a Franciscan (to whom Dominicans were often rivals and almost enemies), but also because he did not share the standpoint of Aquinas on several important questions Yet on this question of biblical inspiration he is, if possible, still more emphatic. He recurs to it over and over again in his *Dialogus* The Pope himself may not contradict any

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biblical detail, it would be heresy in a pope "if, for instance, he were to preach that David was not the son of Jesse, or that Jeroboam had not been King of Israel." In other places he gives similar concrete instances: it would be heretical to deny that Solomon was Bathsheba's son. It was this spirit which made it almost inevitable for the seventeenth-century Roman Congregation, with papal approval, to condemn Galileo as a man who was guilty of having pushed his scientific speculations to a point which brought them into flat contradiction with Bible certainties. We may see this especially in St Thomas (for it is better still to take him as the crucial example) if we trace two of his most remarkable conclusions back to their source. In one section, after full discussion, he decides definitely that the joy of the blessed in Heaven will be increased by the sight of the damned wallowing beneath in hell. The blessed will not, of course, rejoice in all these infernal torments *per se*, but incidentally, "considering in them the order of God's justice, and their own liberation, whereat they will rejoice." How can he thus decide, it may be asked, after he himself has pointed out that to rejoice in another's pains may be ordinarily classed as hatred, and that God does not delight in men's pains? Those apparently invincible natural considerations are brushed aside by one plain Bible text: "The just shall rejoice when he shall see the revenge"<sup>1</sup>. That vindictive verse of a Hebrew poet, to St Thomas, outweighs everything else. So had it been with Peter Lombard in his *Sentences*, so it is with Thomas's fellow-Dominican and contemporary, the great encyclopædist Vincent of

<sup>1</sup> Ps lvi 11, Douay Version (in the Vulgate, *Lætabit justus cum viderit vindictam*)

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Beauvais ; so is it with St. Bonaventura, in spite of Franciscan humanity , so is it even in early Renaissance times with that other great Franciscan scholastic and saint, Bernardino of Siena. He, indeed, actually outdoes his predecessors and contemporaries, pointing out that all musical harmony needs not only soft but also deep and stern voices, and that God's harmony of heaven could not be complete without these bellowings of the damned. Not one of these men was sufficiently shocked by his logical conclusion to look back critically at his premises, and to realize that the reasoning which had forced him forward to these horrors reposed upon the serious primary error of bibliolatry, combined with the blind acceptance of an eschatology which owed perhaps almost as much to pagan barbarism as to the Bible.

We see this even more plainly, perhaps, in St Thomas's attitude towards the Inquisition. His character was that of a real saint , and few men, perhaps, would have shrunk more instinctively from burning a fellow-Christian alive. Yet, in the limitations within which he and his fellow-theologians thought and wrote, logic imposed this upon him with inexorable force. If we burn a false coiner alive, why not the man whose guilt is far greater ? If he pleads sincere conviction, if, again, he has every social virtue, that makes him all the more mischievous, since he is all the more likely to seduce other souls, and take them down with his own to hell. Nay, even to the culprit himself we are merciful : for hell has its degrees of combustion, and half an hour of mere earthly fire is not comparable to the increased vehemence of eternal fire which he would earn by living on and making more converts to his devilish doctrines. We cannot expect, perhaps, that even so great and good

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a man as St. Thomas should so shrink from these conclusions as to ask himself over and over again, in the quiet of his study, whether the premises upon which they repose could possibly be correct. But the more completely we absolve the individual thinker, the more severely we must criticize the social and intellectual atmosphere which forced these things upon him. Modern Roman Catholic orthodoxy seldom dares to accept St. Thomas's conclusion here, and still more rarely dares to repudiate frankly his premises, yet none has attempted to break one link in his logical argument.

So far, then, we must criticize not so much St. Thomas as the whole body of Scholasticism. It was a philosophical system, differing in important respects from ancient thought on the one hand and modern thought on the other. Greek thought grew up dialectically, with comparatively little emphasis upon experimental science, but it was little restricted by priestly authority. Modern thought is seldom dialectic in form, is unfettered by theological authority, and is very deeply influenced by experimental science. Medieval thought, which is still that of the Roman Catholic Church, was practically independent of experimental science in any strict sense; but, on the other hand, it was absolutely dependent upon ecclesiastical dogma. The student-pope of the nineteenth century, Leo XIII, recommended the study of history in a famous rescript to the clergy of France. But (he added) they must never forget that history contains "a collection of facts which impose themselves upon our faith, and which no man is permitted to call in question"<sup>1</sup>. There he spoke as any one of his pre-

<sup>1</sup> Un ensemble de faits qui s'imposent à la foi, et qu'il n'est permis à personne de révoquer en doute." Letter of Sept. 8, 1899

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decessors would have spoken for a thousand years past. No medieval philosopher could afford to neglect that warning, emphasized in daily life by the activities of the Inquisition.

But, even within these limitations, there were contemporaries who saw clearly that Albertus Magnus and Aquinas, though they had already become classics in their lifetime, were far from perfect. Bacon criticizes St. Thomas in very much the same terms as Thomas Huxley might have used. He pointed out that his work was a most imposing edifice, yet it rested upon insecure foundations—upon a Bible often misunderstood, an Aristotle often misunderstood, and an almost total neglect of the mathematical and physical sciences.

This remarkable man was born probably a little after 1210, and died about 1292. He stands at the highest point of that trend towards science which Oxford inherited from Grosseteste. Albert, indeed, had appealed to experience and talked of experience, but he had done little or no experimental work himself, indeed he actually counted as "experience" the things which he found ancient writers claiming to have done. Bacon, in his insistence upon actual personally-conducted experiments, was a true harbinger of the Renaissance. His merits in this respect have sometimes been exaggerated, and to the last he remained a true scholastic; for him, theology is the queen of sciences. But, within the scholastic limits, he shows an independence which is invaluable for the light it throws upon the general scholastic tendencies.

He studied under Grosseteste at Oxford, and thence at Paris, where he may have sat under Alexander of Hales and Albertus Magnus. After six years or more, he returned to Oxford as teacher, thence again to Paris,



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where he was persecuted by the officials of his Franciscan Order until a personal friend became Pope (Clement IV., 1265-68). Under this short-lived protection of three years he produced an astounding body of work, and was still writing in 1277, when the Bishop of Paris condemned one of his conclusions and the Franciscan authorities put him for a second time into confinement. He was freed in 1292, when he wrote his *Compendium of the Study of Theology*, and probably died soon after.

We must discount his criticisms as those of a disappointed man, but, on the whole, they are supported by irrefragable evidence from other sources. He believed that Philosophy comes to us from heaven, so that the earliest men on earth were the greatest philosophers. Their immense span of life was granted to them in order that they might advance to the same phenomenal extent, by actual experience, in the knowledge of this universe in which God has placed us. But sin came in, and nothing dims the heavenly light more fatally than this for "Philosophy is nothing but the explanation of Divine Wisdom through teaching and moral conduct, therefore there is but one Wisdom, which is contained in Holy Scripture." Solomon brought a revival of wisdom to this imperfect world. A second revival came with the Greek philosophers, from Thales to Aristotle, in whom wisdom reached the highest point possible for that time. If these men so far surpassed Bacon's contemporaries, this was because they were so far cleaner in their lives: and here Bacon brings an indictment against Parisian university morals which is directly borne out by contemporaries like Cardinal Jacques de Vitry, and indirectly by St. Bonaventura. His ignorance of ancient history, almost unavoidable in his circumstances,

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is more significant for us in some ways than if he had succeeded in breaking through to the light on these two points. For here this intellect of most exceptional penetration falls into the obvious snare from which nothing can protect us but a close and unsparing study of the actual past. The faults of his own age, only too patent to all generous minds, tempted him to imagine a far-off past in which this world had been a happier and better place. Thus St Augustine's first task, in his *City of God*, had been to fill chapter after chapter with polemics against those who attributed all present evils to this mushroom-growth of Christianity, and who yearned for a return of the good old pagan world. Thus again, as Professor Gilson truly says, there is .

“ A point which has not been sufficiently noted, and which gives intelligibility to the persecutions which Bacon suffered. He is not only a philosopher, he is also a prophet. All his vituperations against the disorder and decadence of philosophy in his time, his violent attacks against Hales, Albert and Aquinas, are the natural reactions of a reformer whose action is contradicted and retarded by false prophets. The secret thought which inspires Bacon is that the 13th century is an epoch of barbarism, analogous to the two former which humanity has had to traverse by reason of its sins. How then can he conceive his own mission, except as analogous to those of Solomon and Aristotle? This profound consciousness of a lofty mission to be fulfilled, this feeling that he has a right to a place of honour in the world's history and in human thought, explain the haughty and aggressive tone which he often employs, his scorn for his opponents, that language of a reformer and restorer which he uses to the Pope himself, and finally even the pitiless hostility shown by his superiors ”

Bacon tells us of others who were struggling, like himself, to bring philosophy down to more solid realities by testing all things, as far as possible, experimentally. It is not so strange that the scholastics, in

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general, were so neglectful of mathematics and physical science ; but we may wonder that, in other ways, so little was done to meet his criticisms, which modern research has often emphasized. Within their own chosen field—the Bible, the Fathers, and Aristotle—much might have been done to strengthen the very foundations. These sources, said Bacon, are not only often misunderstood, but the text itself is often intolerably corrupt.

Ill *understood*, through utter ignorance of the two key-languages, Greek and Hebrew. Bacon knows no translator since Boethius, who has really known both the language and the subject. Hence the West is ignorant of all but a small fraction of the Greek Fathers—that is, of the earliest and best Bible commentaries. Even with Aristotle, translators often make him say the exact opposite of his real meaning. “If I had the power, I would burn them all.” Here he certainly falls into unjust exaggeration. Aquinas encouraged his fellow-friar Moerbeke to make new translations, and certainly he nearly always gets at Aristotle’s general sense, except perhaps in the physical books. Worst of all (says Bacon) is the Bible—as we have it in the West, it is full of falsehoods and uncertainties.

And this brings him to the question of *texts*. There exist ancient MSS. where the text is pure ; but these that men now use at Paris are full of corruptions. Franciscans and Dominicans have tried in turn to produce better editions for university use, but only to make confusion worse confounded. “Twenty years ago the Dominicans made this attempt ; and now they themselves have issued a decree forbidding the use of that revision—in its stead they have made another still more faulty.” The greatest modern authority on Paris University in the thirteenth

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century, the Dominican Fr. Denifle, confesses frankly, "Roger Bacon was right," in his complaint that "the text is for the most part horribly corrupt" in the Parisian standard version. Bacon beseeches the Pope to step in here. "The Church slumbereth . . . There hath been no Pope for 900 years, nor any inferior Pontiff, who hath been solicitous for the profit of the Church through translations, save only [Bishop Grosseteste]" Either a Pope or a General Council must grapple with this correction of the Vulgate text—no private enterprise can combat these innumerable faulty MSS. which now hold the field. This dire necessity was obvious; yet Bacon's appeal was in vain. It is true that, in 1311, the Council of Vienne decreed the establishment of chairs in Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, and Chaldee at five universities, among which Oxford was included. But the purpose here was missionary, not scientific. As Rashdall says: "The new studies were for the conversion of Jews or Turks in the East, not to promote learning or the better understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures in the West." There is scarcely any trace that this decree was fulfilled in fact. Bacon's ideas had to wait for the Renaissance to bear real fruit in practice. As to the Vulgate text, it was not seriously taken in hand until the Council of Trent. In 1590, under Sixtus V., the first papally authorized edition of the Vulgate was published as "true, lawful, authentic, unquestioned". Other editions were to be suppressed, under anathema. In 1592 Clement VIII. published under similar anathemas a revision of his own, differing in more than 3,000 places from the superseded Sixtine. It is only in this twentieth century that such a scientific revision has been made as Bacon had called for more than six centuries earlier.

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Bacon's mechanical ideas or discoveries have often been exaggerated. He vaguely forecasts locomotives and aeroplanes, but we cannot be sure how far he is serious. "He had an inkling of great discoveries, yet did not himself make any" But his treatise on Optics was not superseded until the end of the sixteenth century, and one of his geographical theories, as quoted by Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly 150 years after his death, was one of the passages which encouraged Columbus to seek for America.

Yet all these details, however important, pale in significance before the force and originality of Bacon's attitude towards the world in which we live. For him, the philosopher is he who grasps, to the utmost of his own power, the meaning of this universe. This cannot be better emphasized than in the words of the distinguished French scholar whose *Philosophie au Moyen Âge* is a model of compression and completeness.

"The first condition for the progress of Philosophy," writes Professor Gilson, "is to clear away the hindrances to its development. One of the most fatal of these is the superstition of authority, and never was that superstition more widespread than among Bacon's contemporaries. He pursues them with his sarcasms, without sparing any man or any religious order, even his own. If he indulges in personalities, this is not for love of dispute, but for the greater good of Truth and the Church. Experimental Science (*scientia experimentalis*, a term which appears from Bacon's pen for the first time in the history of human thought) is superior to all other kinds of knowledge. If we consider the miserable conditions under which he lived, the innumerable difficulties of which he perpetually complained, which prevented him not only from making experiments but even from writing, then we shall be amazed at this unfortunate genius who, alone in the 13th century and perhaps even until to-day, dared to found a Scholasticism upon a science which was completely new, freed from the influence of Aristotle and owing homage to nothing but experience and reason."

## CHAPTER XII

### THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

YET Bacon, it must be repeated, was a scholastic, and the gradual publication of all his hitherto unprinted work is showing with increasing clearness that we must not separate him from his scholastic surroundings. As Carlyle loved to say, a man cannot jump away from his own shadow. Let us go back now to the age when Scholasticism was only in process of formation, and to a thinker whose ideas, if not so solid, were equally original and far more influential in their own day.

Just as Dante shows his independence by assigning hell to more than one pope—including even Celestine V, who has actually been canonized—just as he assigns heaven, on the other hand, to Cunizza the warm-hearted adulteress, and Siger, who ought by all rules to have been burned for his unorthodoxy, so he places still higher among the stars a yet more dangerous heretic. Side by side with St. Bonaventura, among the glorious band of religious thinkers, we find in his *Paradiso* “the Calabrian abbot Joachim, endowed with the spirit of prophecy”.

Il calavrese abate Giovacchino  
Di spirito profetico dotato

Those words of Dante are the echo, or perhaps the source, of the anthem which pilgrims sing still in Calabria on

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the day of the Blessed Joachim. His prophecies were printed again and again for the edification of the faithful, down to the end of the seventeenth century.

He was born in 1137 among the wild mountains of Calabria, a very antipodes to restless, swarming Paris. The son of a wealthy citizen, he never broke himself to conventual life, but kept his untamed individuality to the last. Yet he enjoyed the friendship and patronage of three successive popes, who probably never read his writings but respected his character. His secretary, Luke, afterwards Archbishop of Cosenza, tells us a romantic story of his youthful wanderings to Constantinople and to the Holy Land, where visions came upon him on Mount Tabor. Scholars tell us to suspect these, yet, even if we are dealing with a romance from Luke's pen, it is a romance *ben trovato*, accordant with what we know of the ripened man. At home, in Calabria, he could see from his mountain tops those of Greece and Sicily—he was on the confines of three civilizations. The Greek tongue was still spoken around him by those Basilian monks, almost as numerous as the Benedictines here and there, who gave obedience to Rome but were allowed to keep their Greek liturgy. In Sicily, Islam flourished under the Norman sovereigns. Here was variety and freedom in the air, while in Paris everything was tending to a crystallization and a consequent formalism comparable to that of the Council of Tient. The great universities were fighting their way, through the disputes of the Schools, towards a higher synthesis of thought, but meanwhile there were other fields, wilder but with charm and health in their very wildness, of which none could have been more favourable for fruitful originality than Joachim's Calabria.

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On his return from Palestine he first entered a Cistercian convent as simple lay-brother. Then for some years he went about as a lay-preacher. This was contrary to Church law, but St. Francis of Assisi was to do the same shortly after him, and even St. Catharine of Siena is said to have preached in the convents of Sardinia. In the end he was obliged to take Holy Orders, and took full monastic vows at Corazzo here he buried himself in the Bible. In 1178 they persuaded him to accept the abbacy; but the labour of administration and the difficulty of keeping discipline—his writings contain bitter complaints of monastic decay, even among the Cistercians—drove him to approach Lucius III, who relieved him of this burden. Thenceforward his life was that of a hermit, wholly absorbed in prayer, meditation, study, and writing. Lucius III, Urban III, and Clement III blessed his writings, on condition that he should submit them to Rome for approval. In 1190 Richard I of England saw him at Messina and honoured him as a prophet. On the other hand, the Cistercian General Chapter of 1192 summoned him to appear and be judged for disobedience. Disciples flocked to him, and for the most serious of these he built the abbey of Flora in strict observance of the Cistercian Rule. In 1200 he passed on this abbey to a chosen successor, and retired to his old beloved hermitage, where he died in 1202. Luke tells us of his love and pity for all men, and his devotion to the Eucharist. When he said Mass his withered and livid face took an angelic radiance. "Often times I have come upon him kneeling, with hands and eyes raised to heaven, conversing as gleefully with Jesus Christ as though he saw Him face to face."



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He himself, in his *Psaltery of Ten Strings*, tells us how he sang himself into the secrets of God

“Modern men” (he says) “know not how great is the reward of psalmody I myself, in former days, sought anxiously after God’s words, and was fain to come to the knowledge of the truth through assiduous reading But, while I burned to catch her through diligence in reading, she would take unto herself the wings of the wind, and flee still farther from me But when, in my latest fervour of spirit, I began for God’s sake to delight in singing of psalms, then this solitary psalmody began to open out unto me many things in Holy Scripture which until then I had been unable to trace”

A similar saying is recorded of him

“He that is a true monk, counts nothing his own except his lute”

Something very near to St Francis’s conception, a few years later, of the friars as “minstrels of God”

If it was the fervour of Hebrew poetry which fed his spiritual flame, it was the Apocalypse from which he drew most of his material To the earliest disciples Christ’s second coming had seemed a thing of to-morrow. As the world grew older the expectation receded, yet those prophecies of Armageddon and the Reign of the Saints haunted men’s minds throughout the Middle Ages and far beyond St Thomas More thought that the world might be close upon its end In Joachim’s mind this took a very definite shape He saw in spirit the whole scheme of God’s dealings with man, in orderly historical perspective St. Augustine already had planned out past religious history into six ages, and had looked forward to the seventh as a Day of Sabbath Rest for the chartered freemen of the City of God John the Scot

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had done something of the same kind ; but Joachim probably knew nothing of John Muslim theology, again, attached special importance to the year A D 1260.

He took his text from Revelation xiv 6. " And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto every nation and kindred and tongue " To this God-intoxicated visionary, haunted by the hollowness which he seemed to find everywhere in his own age, here came an inspiration, fantastic perhaps, but all the more compelling because it was home-bred, spirit of his own spirit It went back, in effect, to the essence of earliest Christianity the idea that we can, if we choose, bury all that was worst in the past and reach forward to all that is best in the future "Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning"

World history, before the end of all things comes, will have fallen into three main eras, of which two are already past (within a few years), and the third may dawn now at any time These are the Ages respectively of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit The first reaches from Adam to Christ 1260 years, according to common computations of Bible history. The second, beginning with Christ, will therefore end in or about A D 1260, Joachim recognized the possibility of some miscalculation The third will, roughly, display the struggles and the final victory prophesied in the Apocalypse The first was the age of servitude, the second of filial obedience, the third will be that of liberty The first, of fear ; the second, of faith, the third, of charity The first, of the married state (the married priesthood of the Old Testament was always something of a mystery to the later medieval mind), the second, of priesthood ; and the third, of

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monachism. The Bible of the first age was the Old Testament ; that of the second was the New ; that of the third—this Everlasting Gospel, which God will send His angel to preach so dramatically to the world, will be no new book, but a new light in men's hearts they will study Old and New with minds so pentecostally inspired that the advance shall be as great as that from the Old Testament to the New As the Son proceeds from the Father, and the Holy Ghost proceeds from both, so does the Everlasting Gospel proceed from Old and New Testaments Thus final salvation for humanity lies not so much in following traditions, even the most sacred, as in rising above them We must no longer conceive the Church as a vast immovable temple, destined to stand where it always has stood, but rather as the tabernacle that accompanied Israel through its wanderings in the wilderness , pitched here for to-day's worship, but destined to be folded up and carried forward as mankind marches on The theory is worked out at great length, with a wealth of detail and allegorical proofs from the Bible , and, to the attentive reader, it is definitely solvent of past tradition hierarchy, priesthood, sacramental system will no longer be essential to this new world of anchorites After all, the first great recorded hermit, St Antony, seems to have lived year after year without the Eucharist. And in this new Age the ordinary priesthood will be superseded by monks, and those will live mainly as hermits, in contemplation and Bible-study. The soul will no longer see through a glass darkly, but face to face with God Not that this will be an age of rationalism ; far from it Men will then live by mystic intuition, nourished by prayer and psalmody. Yet, though they live not by the lamp of reason, but by that of the Spirit,

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each will follow his own inner light as the free-thinker does , for " where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." And this liberty will far surpass the comparatively limited liberty of this second age of ours , for this is only the period of faith, while the third shall be that of love Now, creation still groans and travails in pain , then, there will be the glorious liberty of the children of God.

That this man should be with St Bonaventura in Dante's heaven, and that the Calabrian peasants have prayed for his intercession, and kept his feast with sacred song, down into modern times, is one of the most curious paradoxes in medieval history It illustrates the caprice of censorship as clearly on one side as Abailard's condemnation at Soissons does on the other. The head of Abailard's offence was that he refused to see things through a glass darkly, so long as the lamp of reason had not been first employed to the full The Blessed Joachim of Flora preached for individual intuition as the philosopher had preached for reason, yet this subversive doctrine was never condemned by the Roman Church Innocent did indeed condemn quite another book of Joachim's, his work on the Trinity in controversy with Peter Lombard And Alexander IV , in 1255, appointed a commission which solemnly condemned the *Introduction to the Everlasting Gospel* That story is almost as significant as the true story of Joachim's own life.

He had attached to each of his world-ages some great and significant person Abraham was the hero of the first age , Jesus, inevitably, of the second. For the third, of course, this place is left blank . we shall see when the time comes. Elisha and John Baptist were heralds of the

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second age, and St Benedict of the third. Seven or eight years after Joachim's death, suddenly St Francis burst upon the world—he of whom it has been claimed that he was the most Christ-like since Christ. The Saint was scarcely in his grave when bitter quarrels arose between the "Spiritual" friars, those who fought for strict observance of the Rule, and the "Conventuals," the relaxed majority. Within less than a century (1318) four friars were burned alive at Marseilles by a papal commission for the crime of insisting upon so strict an obedience to St Francis's Rule and Testament that it spelt disobedience to their relaxed superiors—one of the clearest examples that historical truth may be theologically fatal. The Spirituals, during this death-struggle for freedom of conscience, caught eagerly at the prophecies of this inspired anchorite who had been protected by three popes, and who had come down from heaven to proclaim the Everlasting Gospel. Who but St Francis should be the unnamed hero of the third age? Who but the Franciscans—this Order which for the first time had been based upon renunciation not only of personal property but even of communal endowments, and whose earliest heroes had not only not been priests, but had sometimes even shrunk from priestly Orders? Who but these Brethren of the true Spirit should be the God-sent pioneers of Christ's liberty when love shall make us free? Scripture, of course, was pressed allegorically into the service of this creed. All men had always known that Noah's Ark was the type of God's Church. To this Church the black-robed Benedictines had done service in their time, these were prefigured by the raven. The soft-grey dove, with her olive-branch and her message of divine comfort, was naturally the Franciscan—the

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“grey friar,” as men called him from his peasant frock of homely natural wool

The flame was fanned by persecution. The friars enrolled themselves from the first as a willing Papal Militia, but many of them, from the papal point of view, had *trop de zèle*. Especially inconvenient was their tenet of the Poverty of Christ. Francis was the complete follower of Christ, that was granted, but did such perfect following comprise necessarily the abandonment of all personal property? Had our Lord and His Apostles in fact possessed any property of their own? The question soon became one of life or death for the Spirituals on the one hand and the Roman hierarchy on the other. Obviously, if the perfect Christian life demands a sort of Christian communism, there was no room for popes and prelates as the world then saw them—men not only among the wealthiest, but also among the proudest and most pompous of princes and barons. The Conventuals themselves, the majority, were by this time almost as unwilling as the hierarchy to “follow, naked, the naked Christ” in St. Francis’s extreme sense. There was practically civil war in the Order. St. Bonaventura (d. 1274), the first Franciscan who became Cardinal and Saint, tried hard for peace while he was General of the Order, yet in theory he decided clearly for the Poverty of Christ. So did Pope Nicholas III in 1279. Clement V., at the Council of Vienne, tried to smother the discussion and to discourage extremists on both sides; but this was not the sort of question to settle by ignoring deep differences. Then came a masterful Pope, John XXII, who had no sympathy whatever with the Spirituals. Not only was he notorious in his day for avarice—he left in his treasury a hoard of gold and

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jewels which kings might have envied—but he was by profession a lawyer, and in action unscrupulous: the Bishop whom he accused of plotting against his life by sorcery was partially flayed alive before his execution. To such a man the Spiritual claims were simply mischievous and nauseous. The dialectical fight had long been waged on the ground of scanty Gospel evidence: the Conventuals, for instance, quoted John xviii. 11: “Put up *thy* sword into the sheath.” This (they argued) proves conclusively that at least one Apostle had at least one possession which Christ, Truth Incarnate, asserted to be His own *argal*.<sup>1</sup> John was not the man to argue thus. Without summoning any General Council, like that of Vienne, or doing more than consult with certain learned and pious men, he decided flatly in the face of two predecessors, thenceforth the assertion of the Poverty of Christ was one of the most fatal of heresies in the eyes of the Inquisition. In 1870 the Papacy became infallible *de jure*, but it had been infallible *de facto* for at least five and a half centuries already, wherever sufficient physical force could be enlisted for it. This, and John’s further despotic decrees, caused a schism in the Franciscan Order, and the General went over to the Emperor, with whom John was at war. Those four Spirituals who were burned at Marseilles in 1318 suffered not only for asserting Christ’s poverty, but for other matters which the Inquisitors solemnly adjudged as “heretical.” Two of these were, the wearing of a frock different from the Conventual standard, and the refusal (in which St Francis would almost certainly have supported them) to beg for corn and oil and wine to be stored in the cellars of those who followed the Naked Christ. Those of the Spirituals who still held out were

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thenceforward driven into rebellion. For them, John was a heretic sitting on the papal throne . for, in addition to this, he had preached on a purely theological point—the Beatific Vision—a sermon which he recanted on his deathbed, and of which the French king had said, when his University of Paris solemnly condemned it, “the Pope shall recant or burn ” It is essential to note that neither John’s creation of a new heresy without help of any Council, nor his own theological lapse, raised in any definite way the claim of Papal Infallibility That was still unripe , and centuries were still to pass before the theologians should invent the all-important distinction between utterances *ex cathedra* and other papal decrees In this early fourteenth century we are at a stage familiar to politicians a violent man presents the world with a *fait accompli*, and leaves it to be justified by argument at some convenient later time. Those four Spirituals of Marseilles were as thoroughly incinerated, and the men and women who collected their bones and ashes as martyrs’ relics were as duly registered in the black book of the Inquisition, as though they had sinned against Innocent III , speaking and defining to all Christendom at the Lateran Council of 1215

Meanwhile it will be seen how naturally Joachimism made strides among the Franciscans from almost the earliest times. John of Parma’s case supplies a most significant instance None of St. Francis’s successors in the Generalship, not even St Bonaventura, equalled this man in strict personal observance of Franciscan poverty and humility. He was also one of their learned men, and he was a convinced Joachite. His Joachimism led to a revolt and his deposition. So also was Hugues de Digne, the great preacher whose memory Joinville has con-



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secrated in his *Memoirs*. But the cause had a fatal attraction for extremists, and the Spirituals in general were strongly opposed to university philosophy for the Order. Here again they were historically right but theologically wrong, and one of them, at Paris, took a step for which there was not even historical justification. He wrote his *Introduction to the Everlasting Gospel*, which so exaggerated and distorted the Joachite doctrines as to put a new face altogether upon the question. Here was a theory which no man could reconcile with traditional orthodoxy. Joachim's own writings were indeed solvent of the current Church doctrines, but here was something flatly heretical. It caused such a scandal in the university that it found a place among great current events in the *Roman de la Rose*. Moreover, it coincided with the great quarrel for professorships between the friars and the secular masters, and gave a great handle to the latter. Therefore Alexander IV. appointed a commission which definitely and finally condemned the *Introduction*, yet without reference to Joachim's own writings. The crucial year 1260 passed without any Reign of the Holy Spirit, and Joachism melted into the general heretical tenets of those extreme Spirituals whom persecution drove into flat rebellion, the so-called Fraticelli.

With other medieval mystics, less dramatic than these, I must here deal very briefly indeed.

The Dominican mysticism, very different from that of the Fraticelli, was traced to its source by Fr. Denifle, himself a Dominican and the most learned of our age in those matters. Germany, in the thirteenth century, had an enormously larger proportion of Dominican nunneries than any other province. seventy out of the whole

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European total of 160. Strassburg alone had seven convents of women; and it was there, and on the Upper Rhine generally, that the new movement flourished. Like all other Orders, the Dominicans had vacillated in their policy with regard to the nunneries. For the friars to undertake their supervision was onerous, sometimes even dangerous, yet, on the other hand, these women could not be left entirely to themselves. Therefore, after alternate changes of policy, the General Chapter of 1286 decreed that the men should supervise and teach in nunneries but, for precaution, *docti fratres* only. Such "learned brethren" were, naturally, often university teachers. In all cases their learning was scholastic; and Denifle shows convincingly how this mingling of two disparate elements produced a third which was different from both. There was seldom enough Latin in any single nun, and practically never in a whole community, for the teaching to be given freely in that language. Therefore the first task of the *doctus frater* was to find German words, as best he could, for his scholastic terms and phrases. The second was no less difficult and exacting—the adaptation of abstract thoughts to the simple minds of pious but imperfectly educated women. We all learn by teaching, and, most of all, by teaching an audience as different as possible from our own mentality. To take an exaggerated example, it was the attempt to teach a Zulu chief which convinced Bishop Colenso that he himself had only a metaphorical belief in the Book of Genesis. And, thirdly, it was quite common for the *doctus frater* to find an Egeria of his own in one at least of his audiences, a woman whose more impulsive mind brought to his own dry formulas the healthiest possible stimulus. Suso confesses this, so does

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our own Rolle of Hampole ; so in modern times did Auguste Comte and J. S. Mill. Eckhart, Suso, Tauler, Dominicans all, arose thus in the Upper Rhine, and their teaching passed by the trade route down the river to Ruysbroeck in Flanders. One of their main doctrines is neo-Platonic in origin, traceable in Augustine, and more definite in Aquinas. There is at the apex of man's mind a spark of divinity, *Scintilla* in Aquinas, *Seelenfunklein* in Eckhart. This is not only a bond between us and God, but (in Eckhart's latest development) it is the immanence of the being and nature of God Himself. *Dies Funklein, das ist Gott*. In another place, "The eye with which I see God is the same as the eye with which God sees me." As De Wulf puts it, "to say the least, he borders perilously on Pantheism." In 1326 he was condemned by the Archbishop of Cologne. He appealed to the Pope, but died next year, and in 1329 John XXII condemned twenty-eight of his propositions. Johann Tauler (d. 1361) was also condemned, but submitted. Heinrich Suso (d. 1363) may easily be studied in English, his *Autobiography* and his *Little Book of Eternal Wisdom* are both accessible in translations. There is especial interest in his testimony to the fact that God had revealed these mysteries to him in his own mother-speech. It is this homely simplicity which makes so much of his peculiar charm, but which also brings him to the brink of unorthodoxy.

De Wulf contends that Eckhart meant his words in an orthodox sense, though his use of the vernacular betrayed him into unorthodox expressions. He adds: "In this way [his teaching] contributed *indirectly* to that debasement of religion which culminated in the Reformation."

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In fact, a period of busy mysticism is generally accompanied or succeeded by one of free thought. However the mystics may claim to be obedient and loyal children of Holy Church, they have essentially some degree of unusual independence. They may well have special relations with one or more priests of their own choice, but the priesthood as a whole is less necessary to them, and is often unsympathetic or frankly hostile. Extreme cases of this kind may be found in the lately discovered autobiography of Chaucer's younger contemporary, Margery Kempe of Lynn, which should be read by all who would understand the "humours" (in Ben Jonson's sense) of English religious life at that day. Moreover, that claim to peculiarly direct revelation from God, which is the essence of mysticism, comes in itself perilously near to free thought. If the specially fervent soul may approach so directly to God, and receive such direct teaching from Heaven, why not the ordinary layman also, in his own degree? Therefore these chapters must sketch that growth of the lay spirit which ran parallel or consequent to the mysticism of the thirteenth century. Both were, to some extent, reactions against the excessive dominance of Scholasticism. It is true that the mystic began by thinking in scholastic formulas, and cast even his vernacular writings in the scholastic mould. Rolle, the English mystic who revolted so explicitly and so violently against that scholasticism under which he had suffered for a year or so at Oxford, is an exception, yet even he has much of scholastic formalism in his arrangement of matter. The rebel also will use scholastic weapons against scholastic orthodoxy, but his aim will be the dethronement of things that are sacred to university tradition. Totalitarian censorship can successfully shep-

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herd many souls for many years , but it cannot control all for always If Philip of Valois was able to say of an exceptionally strong pope that he should recant his theological error or be burned, this was because the lay revolt had already attained formidable proportions thirty years earlier under Philip the Fair.

## CHAPTER XIII

### BY WHOSE AUTHORITY,

AT this point we must turn back to the earlier stages of that question which formed the greatest practical problem of the Middle Ages - the question of world-government. It was taken for granted on all hands that European civilization was to dominate the world. In most cases this was tacitly assumed, but sometimes it appeared more explicitly in the exposition of Christ's words announcing that the end of all things would not come until all nations had first been converted to the Faith (Mark xiii. 10, Luke xxiv. 47, Apoc. xv. 4). Christianity, then, is divinely ordained for world-domination; but under what form of government? Here, it may be said, is a political question, but pure politics were a late growth in the Middle Ages. As Figgis says, "it was the Council of Constance (1415-18) which first exhibited the conflict of pure politics on the grand scale." For many centuries past there had been no political treatises which were not either primarily theological or primarily legal. Scholars have treated Uberto da Lampugnano's lecture on the Empire in 1380 as epoch-making. Yet it is now known that this is simply repeated, almost word for word, from Bartolus's commentary on a chapter of the Civil Law, delivered forty years earlier. Politics were a matter for divines and legists - the basis was theological, with certain admixtures from Aristotle and from Civil Law.

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Thus the struggle for world-rule, which we see nowadays in the form of a contest between Autocracy and Democracy, was represented during the Middle Ages by the contest between Empire and Papacy. Not, of course, that the analogy can be pressed too far: for Empire and Papacy were alike totalitarian in their aims. The Emperor's legal advisers supplied him with ammunition from Roman Civil Law, especially with the maxim *quod principi placuit legis habet vigorem*—"the Emperor's decrees have the force of law." The Papacy, on the other hand, denied heaven to all who stood outside the Church—*extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*—and as we shall see, the Papacy finally came to treat Church and Pope as synonymous terms.

Pope Gelasius I. (492-96) formulated the famous doctrine that Emperor and Pope are alike supreme, each in his own sphere. But, in those days when Church and State were regarded theoretically as two sides of the same body, how were those two "supremes" to avoid conflict? It became, naturally, a question of tact and reason on both sides. A most significant example is that of St. Gregory I, the second converter of England (590-604). He found himself faced by an imperial decree which, to a very considerable extent, trespassed upon Church ground, for it enacted that no soldier might take the monastic vows until he had served out his full time in the army. Gregory was a man who had all the courage of his convictions, but here he made no resistance. He felt that the decree "closed to many men the way to heaven", yet his conclusion was, "what am I but dust and a worm?" And he undertook, as an obedient subject, to promulgate the law among his flock.

But, during that great controversy concerning image-

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worship which rent the Church and gave a great access of strength to the more consistently image-worshipping West, the Papacy gained enormously. In 728, when Leo the Isaurian was fighting with much success to suppress images in the East, the popes had an excuse not only for theological but also for political revolt—they revived for a while the Roman Republic, independent of Constantinople, with themselves at its head. And, as time went on, they were able to go further and further upon the tide of popular thought. They had the great moral force of men who had held their ground during the barbarian invasions, while the civil magistrate was often swept away. And, gradually, less moral forces fought also for them. As learning declined, the power of Tradition grew. There is no doubt that this had counted heavily from the earliest times, but its power was enormously increased by the decline of book-learning. Tradition was an elastic weapon, as the medieval monks themselves discovered. "*homo est obliviosum animal*," writes one scribe of the eleventh century, as his reason for conformity to the growing custom of recording all gifts of land in hard-and-fast ink and parchment. Therefore, since the clergy were the only depositaries of Christian tradition, it lost nothing in their hands. Even with books, since nearly all readers were clerics, they were always interpreted from the clerical point of view. It is difficult to exaggerate the force of this, in days when nothing like scientific history was possible. We have seen how Bacon's ignorance of Greek and Roman history distorted his views in one important field, and Pope Gregory II. (715-31), or the Papal official who wrote in his name against the Emperor Leo, actually imagined the Apostles to have worshipped images!



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In 800, then, when the Eastern Emperor was a far-off abstraction and the Western Empire was revived under Charles the Great, the Pope was no longer compelled to imitate St Gregory's humility yet this new situation, again, was equivocal. On his own initiative, without first consent asked from Charles, the Pope put the crown upon his head at Christmas Day Mass in St Peter's. This naturally gave colour to the later claim that popes were makers of emperors. On the other hand, he then prostrated himself and "worshipped" the new-made sovereign, as the Eastern Patriarchs had always prostrated themselves before their emperor. Not only was this in accordance with Frankish custom, but anti-papal controversialists will note in due time that it had excellent Biblical precedent. "Under the Old Law, it was not kings who bowed down before priests, but kings and princes to whom priests and prophets did obeisance." Charles himself had no trouble in this field, indeed, the great Church Synod which he held at Frankfurt (794), and which was attended by bishops from as far as Spain and England, practically called upon the Pope to reverse his theological policy in the matter of image-worship. Hadrian I had concurred with the Second Council of Nicaea, which decreed that images should be set up in churches for worship, though not with the full worship reserved for God Almighty but Charles's Council had no hesitation in reversing this decision, and the Pope showed no fight. In process of time, however, the balance of power was gradually reversed. Papal policy was incomparably more consistent and persistent than that of any Emperor. There were (apart from one notorious case, that of John XII) no child-popes, while lay sovereignties frequently laboured under the

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fatal disadvantage of a boy-ruler. Again, even disputed successions were far rarer in the Papacy than in any royal line.

Under Charles's weak successors, papal power made rapid strides, especially under the able and masterful Nicholas I (858-67). It had two sources of strength which enabled popes to employ, consciously or instinctively, one of the most successful of diplomatic moves—that of presenting the opponent with a *fait accompli*, and leaving him to dispute it in argument as best he can. In every important dispute, whether religious or civil, one party at least, and generally both, naturally appealed to the Pope as arbiter, either as trusting to his justice or as hoping to persuade him by the offer of some worldly advantage. The power to which all men naturally appeal soon becomes, of necessity, the predominant power. Again, however vague the frontiers between ecclesiastical and civil questions might be in many directions, one point was undisputed and indisputable—the Pope was the acknowledged guardian of Christian morality. Thus, where his direct interference in politics might be resented and disputed, he could always claim to pronounce judgment *ratione peccati*—on the ground of sin. This came out strongly under Nicholas I. Lothair II of Lorraine repudiated his wife, with the connivance of the bishops in his own realm, and married his mistress. Both parties appealed to Nicholas, and there was almost as much political manœuvring here as in the great case of Henry VIII. and Catharine of Aragon. But Nicholas decided justly, excommunicated Lothair, and finally won in spite of that prince's powerful allies, the Emperor Louis and the Episcopate of Lorraine. Nicholas did not formally and explicitly decree the deposition of Lothair,

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matters never went so far as that. But his implications were plain enough. He spoke of Lothair's sovereignty, so long as the question was still undecided, as doubtful. "King Lothair—but would that he were king!" Threatening him with excommunication in case of impenitence, he pointed out that this would mean absolute separation from intercourse with other Christians. He claimed unlimited authority in such disciplinary matters, and this meant that wherever a political question involved any serious moral issue the Pope had the right of deciding not only how a prince was to act but, in the last resort, whether he should be a prince at all. Thus a precedent was set for the more direct victory of Gregory VII over Henry IV.

In another direction also the reign of Nicholas I was epoch-making. He gave papal approval to the Forged Decretals. This collection, much as it did to help the papal cause, was not compiled either at Rome or in direct defence of the popes. Its author was some unknown Frankish cleric, probably in the diocese of Reims, about A.D. 850. It purports to consist of authoritative papal decrees, yet the first part consists entirely of forgeries, while the second, after thirty forgeries, passes on to a series half-genuine and half-false, made up of scraps from chronicles and similar documents. Its object was to defend the bishops against the tyranny of archbishops, and the clergy in general against the laity. With this aim, the forger naturally emphasized the appeal to Rome as the natural refuge of the oppressed. In the main, those Forged Decretals amounted to no more than a logical justification for the actual historical facts of the past few centuries. They went little further than to lock and rivet a network of bonds and obligations

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which had grown up gradually and more or less loosely over the Western Empire. Not unopposed step by step : but at each point the force of circumstances had rendered opposition as fruitless as that to Cromwell or Napoleon ; and, all things considered, it is difficult to assert that this process of consolidation of papal power, however strictly illegal in its encroachments, was either less beneficial than anything which, in that age, its adversaries could have substituted for it, or even less lawful and constitutional than what they would probably have substituted. It was right that the Frankish bishops should assert and obtain considerable independence of the secular power, such as it was in those days. It was right, among such princes and such governments as dominated Europe through the Middle Ages, that there should be another rival power whose interests often crossed those of the worldly potentate at right angles, even though he himself might often be almost as worldly and unscrupulous as they. The time was not yet ripe for any popular religious revolt, or for that assertion of nationality in religion which, as it grew, burst asunder the theoretically broader, but really narrower imperialistic conception of Christianity under shelter of which the Church had developed through the centuries. In brief, the shortcomings both of Church and of State in this quarrel (even if they were greater than they are sometimes painted) are only of secondary importance to us at this distance. What we see is that (as with John and his barons) there was enough justice on each side, and enough selfishness on each side, to keep the battle dubious until the world had worked out a wider synthesis than either of the conflicting parties could then dream of. Just as the contest between king and barons

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in England resulted in the growth of the House of Commons to power, so that of Papacy and Empire ended in the Reformation, the growth of national Churches, and gradual liberty of conscience

The value of such a collection to the papacy was obvious. Although these Decretals went at scarcely any point beyond previous papal claims, some of them very ancient, it was a great gain to have those claims consecrated by what seemed such clear and irrefragable authorities. Hincmar, the great Archbishop of Reims, did indeed once stigmatize this newly-produced volume as "*figmenta compilata*", but on other occasions, where it suited his purpose, he made use of them. Nicholas, appealed to, gave his formal decision in favour of the book's genuine character. Thenceforward these forgeries passed practically unquestioned until cardinals Nicholas of Cusa [1450] and Johannes Turrecremata hinted their doubts. Even then, it was left to the Reformers to expose the forgeries with scientific care, and as late as 1572 the Jesuit Turrianus wrote a volume to defend their authenticity.

Gregory VII realized more than any other pope the value of acting first and arguing after; or at least of simultaneity—a word and a blow. His negotiations with Henry IV and other sovereigns—if negotiation it may be called when one side has always at its beck the terrible medieval weapon of excommunication—enabled him to make stronger and more explicit claims than any of his predecessors. He took his stand on an exaggeration from St Augustine's *City of God*, which was naturally one of the most fertile theological mines in these political discussions. Before Adam's Fall, society was and would have remained communistic, there would have been

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no need for property or lordship, men would have lived like angels. The Fall introduced property and lordship by usurpation, the stronger taking from the weaker. Therefore this earthly State, founded in uncharitableness and sin, is definitely inferior to the Church, the City of God. In Gregory's mind this disparity swells to such proportions as practically to abrogate the Gelasian Concordat. Nicholas I had ignored it, not formally, but to such a practical extent that his efforts were directed solely to forbidding trespass from the lay side, and finding pleas for reciprocal trespass. Under Gregory, this Gordian knot of the boundary between spiritual and secular matters is cut with the sword, with that sword which St Peter wielded. For the Roman Church is now "Princess and Mother of all Churches and Peoples"; no longer "of all Churches" only. Peter is not only the Chief Apostle but he "whom the Lord Jesus Christ, King of Glory, hath set as Prince over the Kingdoms of the World". From this he repeatedly draws the deduction

"If St Peter's successor has the right of judging and unbinding in heavenly and spiritual matters, how much greater is his right over earthly and worldly things." God forbid that we should deny the right of judging earthly quarrels to him who hath received the power of opening or closing the heavens !"

This Pope not only prescribes their political conduct to the kings of Denmark and England, but is ready to give kingdoms away. To Sweyn of Denmark he writes .

"There is, not far from us, a certain very wealthy province by the sea coast [probably Illyria], which is in the possession of vile and grovelling heretics [*quam viles et ignavi tenent heretici*]. In this province we would fain place one of thy sons as leader and prince

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and defender of Christendom, if thou wouldst give him to the Holy See, to fight [for her] with a body of warriors devoted to his person "

That case of Gregory VII. and Henry IV. called forth a copious flood of political pamphlets, which ran upon lines somewhat surprising to modern ideas. In process of time, when the study of Roman Imperial Law had attained to its full height at the University of Bologna, it was natural that the Emperor and other worldly princes should lay great stress on absolutist maxims culled from imperial decrees or from the commentators, and especially upon those six words which claim that the sovereign's will is law. *Quod principi placuit legis habet vigorem*. It was natural, again, that ecclesiastical princes should rely mainly upon the Bible and its commentators, the Fathers. But the Church accepted most of the principles of Roman Civil Law, indeed, her own Canon Law rested to a great extent upon that foundation. And, again, the earthly sovereign, in theory at least, admitted biblical inerrancy as fully as the Pope himself did. But, whereas we might expect the Christian Church to lay most stress upon the New Testament, that direct record of Christ and His Apostles, their main emphasis was, in fact, upon the stories and prophecies of the Old Testament, upon the words of the despised Hebrew. For Christ's submission to the earthly powers, in all questions but those in which conscience might be most directly concerned, was very difficult to explain away. The rebuke to Peter seems, in itself, plain enough: "Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." But it gains tenfold emphasis from Peter's own words, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's

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sake : whether to the King as supreme, or to governors," etc., etc (1 Peter II. 13) Equally difficult was it to ignore Paul's words to the Romans (XIII 1-7) : the civil powers are " God's ministers " · they " bear not the sword in vain " , " whosoever resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God " The ecclesiastical champion could meet these very plain words only by distinctions which savoured too obviously of special pleading Peter and Paul, it was argued, speak there only of true sovereigns, not of tyrants i.e. of sovereigns favourable, not unfavourable, to ecclesiastical claims. Nicholas I used, if not invented, this plea . so that, as Hauck says, " we do not go beyond his thoughts when we say that he claims, on behalf of the Church, the right of revolution " Or, again, their words refer not to the clergy, whose province is to teach, but only to the laity, to whom those epistles were addressed by their apostolic teachers. They were on much safer ground when they went back to the Old Testament , to that Jewish State which was so strongly theocratic from the days when Samuel deposed Saul to those of the later prophets. The strongest text here was to be found in God's commission to Jeremiah (I. 10) " See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, and to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant " Innocent III , in an elaborate argument, proved this to be parallel with Christ's commission of authority to his disciples Moreover, the habitual licence of allegorical exposition, of which the clergy held the monopoly, afforded them a multitude of other arguments The sun, in Genesis, is created before the moon , the latter, therefore, with her borrowed light, betokens the mere earthly power, with its dependence upon its true sun, the Church. " Feed



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my sheep," again, makes no distinction of persons: all baptized creatures, clerical or lay, are subject to Peter's government, even as his walking upon the waters showed his dominance over the whole world. The only really strong texts from the whole New Testament were those which gave the power of binding and loosing, once to St. Peter, and once to the whole group of disciples whom Christ was addressing (Matt. xvi. 19 and xviii. 18, cf. Luke x. 16). The ecclesiastical advocates relied much also upon examples from early Church history, which they, as practically exclusive guardians of the records, naturally manipulated more or less unconsciously in their own favour. Thus every stress was laid upon Ambrose's noble courage in refusing to admit the Emperor Theodosius to Milan Cathedral until he had done penance for his cruelties. But men entirely ignored Gregory's submission, as "dust and a worm," to Maurice, or the fact that Charles the Great had practically told a pope to mend his theological ways, and had been the main agent for forcing into the western version of the Nicene Creed that *Filioque* clause which had no warrant in the original Greek, and which formed thenceforward one of the main obstacles to reunion between the two Churches. Thus few men realized at the time, what is clear enough to us who can look back at all the documents, that the theory of papal power was extended rather by a process of finding argumentative justification for a series of *faits accomplis* than by pure political speculation. The reasons pleaded for papal supremacy at the end of our period were such as would have been greeted by St. Peter and St. Paul with unfeigned astonishment.

Innocent III. inherited all this power, and his use of it is well known. One of his letters brought into Canon

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Law the allegorical exposition of Sun and Moon ; and in another letter to the Greek Patriarch (1199) he shows the almost irresistible advantage that could be taken in those days when nearly all men recognized the inerrancy of the Bible, and the clerical monopoly of exposition. He had demanded submission, and the Patriarch had written a letter almost servile in its studied courtesy, begging for the reasons which supported the universal supremacy of the Roman Church. Innocent, in his reply, quoted "Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock," etc., and again Christ's words to Peter recorded in John **xxi. 17** "The Lord here gave Peter, thrice repeated, the commission to feed His sheep, in order that all might be branded as alien from Christ's fold who refused to accept him, even in his successors, as pastor. For Christ made no distinction between this sheep and that, but said simply *Feed my sheep*, in order that all sheep might be understood to be altogether committed to his hand." He further undertook to prove that "the primacy of the Roman See, constituted not by man but by God—nay, by the God-man—is proved by many evangelical and apostolic testimonies." Here are two of these evangelical testimonies. (1) St Peter once leapt into the sea (John **xxi. 7**), but *sea* stands symbolically in Scripture for the whole world (*see* gloss on Ps. **ciii. 25** *Vulg.*), by that action, therefore, it is signified that Peter took the whole world for his spiritual province. (2) Still more plainly is this proved by Peter's walking on the sea on a previous occasion (Innocent conveniently ignores the unfortunate sequel to this adventure). "for, seeing that *many waters* [Ps **xxviii. 3** *Vulg.*] signifieth 'many peoples' and that *the gathering together of the waters is the seas* (Gen. **i. 10**) therefore Peter, in that he walked over the

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waters of the sea, showed that he had received power over all peoples whatsoever."

St. Thomas Aquinas was the first to treat of this subject in the full light of Aristotle's *Politics*. He shows a wider grasp than his predecessors, and a more balanced judgment, Lord Acton, epigrammatically, called him "the first Whig." But here again, as in his great *Summa Theologica*, his work has a delusive appearance of finality. He employs his logical genius for a fusion of Biblical and Aristotelian ideas. He rather assumes than proves the subjection of State to Church, or rather, that the State is the police department of the Church. Granted his premises, he is almost unassailable. But in thought, as in war, there are often startling changes of front. At the precise point where an impregnable position seems to present itself, the breakdown may be most sudden and complete. The lines are not stormed, but they are quietly turned. After Aquinas's death, it was the turn of the civil power to present the Church with a series of *faits accomplis* which proved very hard to explain away. Here was a revolutionary change, for which we must pass into another chapter.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE LAY REVOLT

WE come now to the rising tide of mother-speech in letters, and of lay spirit in thought. From 1300 onwards (to take a rough date) no Latin will be written which can compare as literature with Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, or Chaucer, nor will the papalist politicians compare in force, and in significance for modern thought, with their opponents.

Innocent III's reign was the culminating point of *successful* (the adjective must be emphasized) papal claims. His ability, his courage, and the general justice of his aims, as compared with those of contemporary sovereigns, carried him through. The sub-contemporary friar, Salimbene of Parma, sums up his successes and failures with sufficient accuracy in two sentences

"The Church flourished and throve in his days, holding the lordship over the Roman Empire and over all the kings and princes of the whole world. Yet this Pope sowed the seeds of the cursed dissensions between Church and Empire, with his chosen Emperors Otto IV and Frederick II, whom he exalted and entitled Son of the Church—but herein he may be excused, that he meant well."

He made and unmade emperors, but died in 1216, on the threshold of the reign of that Frederick II, whom his choice had raised, but who proved finally to be the most dangerous of all anti-papal emperors. Innocent IV. (1243-54) lived to see the failure and death of Frederick

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(1250) Frederick's son Manfred was slain at Benevento (1266), and his grandson Conradino at Tagliacozzo (1268). Thus the long struggle seemed to have ended in a crushing papal victory yet this had been won at the expense of those things which had given most real force to the contentions of Nicholas I, Gregory VII, and Innocent III. Innocent IV had won by employing worldly politics under the spiritual cloak, he had debased the moral currency of the Church. His victory over Frederick II, and that of his successors over Frederick's progeny, were won by calling in a French prince and a French army to decide the civil war in Italy. Optimists will say that such conduct must bring failure in the long run, and even the pessimist will admit that it is a dangerous flaw in the foundation of any policy, especially if that policy claims to rest upon superior morality. We may agree here with the great Oxford teacher whose main object was to warn our generation against unfair criticism of medieval society and religion. "If the Emperor who called himself King of Kings and Caesar Augustus was the most unreal of medieval unrealities, the Pope who would be at once successor of the Apostles and feudal lord from the Rubicon to the sands of Africa was worse, he was a contradiction in terms. The Papal States were a veritable body of death to the true spiritual life of the greatest institution in human history."<sup>1</sup>

This came out more definitely still under Boniface VIII (1294-1303). His quarrel with Philip the Fair of France (1285-1314) changed the whole face of that Pope-Emperor conflict with which Aquinas had been concerned. Philip made no claim of universal dominion.

<sup>1</sup> *Church and State in the Middle Ages*, A. L. Smith (Clarendon Press, 1913), p. 210.

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he demanded freedom to govern his own France in his own way "The King is Emperor in his own Kingdom," claimed the French legists. Again the quarrel arose on a matter of taxation, a money question, where the papacy, as a spiritual power, was at moral disadvantage. Opposition to the Pope came now, not from above but from below - from a local magnate who naturally appeals to his subjects for help against clerical aggression. It is the first pitched battle in that Revolt of the Laity which has so long been preparing, and which has lately been so well told by M. Georges de Lagarde in his *Naissance de l'Esprit Laique*.

Boniface, in 1302, continued the fight by publishing that bull, *Unam Sanctam*, which is the high-water mark of medieval papalist claims, and which has inspired modern extremists like Louis Veuillot to suggest for him the title of "St Boniface." All present-day scholars of his Church recognize this as one of the few papal utterances in all history which are indubitably *ex cathedra* and infallible. The last clause, containing the definition, runs "Moreover, We declare and say and define that it is altogether necessary for salvation, for all human creatures, that they should be subject to the Roman Pontiff."<sup>1</sup> It is only this last defining clause (say modern apologists) which is infallible. and this clause does not clearly specify *how* all creatures are to be subject to the Pope. But the rest of the bull very plainly claims complete subjection, not only in spiritual but also in temporal matters. The disciples' words in Luke xxii 38 "Lord, behold, here are two swords," with Christ's answer "It is enough," are here pressed

<sup>1</sup> Porro subesse Romano Pontifici omni humanae creaturae declaramus dicimus, definimus et pronunciamus omnino esse de necessitate salutis

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into the argument by a wild licence of allegorical interpretation which was borrowed originally from St Bernard. The Inerrant Gospel shows in this text that the Church wields both swords, the spiritual by excommunication and the temporal by commanding kings and magistrates to fight at her bidding. If the Churchman does not do execution with his own hands, that is not so much because he lacks the right, as because he is busied in loftier matters and calls upon the junior partner, the State, to do the work which would degrade his dignity. The State is the police department of the Church. One sword (argues Boniface) must be beneath the other, and the temporal power must be subject (*subijci*) to the spiritual. Equally plain are his words in other contemporary pronouncements, and so are his actions. Moreover, whatever rules theologians may have invented in these later centuries for softening the embarrassing claim here put forward, his contemporaries made no such attempt. Again, even those who deny that Boniface claimed *direct* sovereignty over Philip are obliged to admit that he, like other popes, claimed sovereignty *ratione peccati*. That is, since the Pope is guardian of the world's religion and morals, therefore if there be any ruler whom he condemns as unworthy to reign, he may decree that man's deposition, and release his subjects from their allegiance. Even in this present twentieth century, a theologian has shown, with papal approbation, that the Pope has the right of deposing any ruler whom he may condemn as "apostate."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For this important fact, too little known, see details in my *Papal Infallibility*, Faith Press, 1932, pp 104ff still more fully in my pamphlet, *Malta and Beyond*, pp 111ff

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Philip now sent an unscrupulous minister, Nogaret, who offered the Pope personal violence, with threats of death, in his own palace at Anagni. This aroused disgust in all right minds. Dante, who placed Boniface himself in one of the most ignominious caverns of hell, was yet indignant that Christ's shame and passion should be renewed here in the person of His Vicar. But it killed the old man, and had the same sort of dubious success which we have seen in Abailard's mutilation. In each case it was the sufferer's own faults that had found him out, and this was plain even to those who were revolted by the brutality of the punishment.

The lay party in France became still more aggressive, and attacked many papal theories at their very roots. John of Paris argued that popes were not actual owners even of the Church's endowments, they were simply trustees for the public good, and answerable to the public. Pierre Dubois (1300) was the first of those who, dialectically, turned the main papal weapon against the Pope. He abandoned the conventional ground of abstract speculation, and appealed to notorious realities, present and historical. He argued that in fact the papacy, by its meddling in politics, has sent many souls to hell. The Donation of Constantine did put popes above earthly sovereigns but right is not sufficient without might. The Pope is not, and cannot be, a warrior. Generally he is not even a powerful ruler in any way, a decrepit old man, dependent upon others. The real might of the world is in France, with her unrivalled military tradition. Let a bargain, therefore, be made. Let France hire from Rome the lordship over Europe in consideration of a handsome annual pension, and then we shall have peace and good government. "For it is a peculiar merit of



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the French to have a surer judgment than other nations, and not to act without consideration nor to place themselves in opposition to right reason”<sup>1</sup> And Dubois entitles his whole treatise, “A brief summary and compendious doctrine as to the successful conduct and *abridgement of wars and quarrels*, so far as the Realm of France is concerned” The reader will presently see the significance of the words here italicized Dubois argues similarly in his treatise, “On the Recovery of the Holy Land” The Pope has ruined the Crusades, wasting the strength of Europe in bungling politics and unnecessary wars, give the hegemony of Christendom to France, and the thing will be done

Next in order of time came Dante’s *De Monarchia* He, again, attempted to beat the papalists with their own weapons, but in a different way, harking back to the Bible and to Aristotle He starts his formal argument from St Augustine, thence, by a process which Augustine would almost certainly have admitted, he demonstrates the Emperor’s independence of the Pope in the civil sphere Like Augustine, he appeals to the Ordeal of Battle Rome’s victories had been allowed by God’s Providence she had thus shown her fundamental superiority, with all her faults, over the rival and still more faulty nations. Yet Dante, like Dubois, strikes strongly the note of peace Not peace in George Fox’s sense, but in St Augustine’s, in the sense which

<sup>1</sup> It is a common error to date nationalism from modern times, and especially from the Reformation Nationalism began as soon as, and grew in proportion as, nations themselves crystallized The earliest universities, before 1200, divided themselves at once into nations I have dealt with this subject in detail in *The Cambridge Historical Journal* for 1935 (vol 5) Machiavelli, two centuries later, will appeal like Dubois to common notoriety papal politics have kindled far more wars than they have quenched (*Discourses on Livy*, Book I, chap xii)

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prompted that confession of the great Nonconformist divine, R. W. Dale of Birmingham: "I am for peace at any price—peace even at the price of war." What (asks Dante) is the goal of all human civilization, but peace? Yet for him peace is the *Pax Romana* of the ancient Empire, imposed upon subject peoples by a powerful and just conqueror. If Augustine was first in the Middle Ages to press that point, Pope Nicholas I was the first to bring it into party politics. Pope Gelasius I (492) had decreed a compromise which became classical. Pope and Emperor are alike supreme, each in his own sphere and without right of trespass upon the other. Nicholas I, an able and masterful pontiff, was active everywhere in the political sphere, and found a specious excuse for his interference. In the interests of world-peace, a Pope may dictate to a sovereign his policy, and depose him if disobedient. Peace being a necessity of civilization, it follows that, when the sovereigns cannot keep it, here is the call for Rome, the fount of all pure doctrine and justice, to step in. And since wars, whether foreign or civil, were chronic and ubiquitous in the Middle Ages, therefore the papacy became chronically and ubiquitously political.

While Dante here, as in his *Commedia*, showed himself as the embodiment of medievalism, his younger contemporary, Marsilius of Padua, was strikingly modern. Much must be attributed to his early experience of the turbulent Italian city politics, and to the fact that Padua was a focus of Averroism. By that time, Averroism had become not so much a doctrine as an attitude—its influence was comparable to that of Darwinism in our generation. Marsilius, who was a physician, went on to study at Paris, he became Rector of the University in

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1312, and in 1324 he wrote, in conjunction with Jean de Jandun, his famous *Defensor Pacis*. The very title shows how thoroughly he grasped the policy of turning papal weapons against the papacy. In 1325 or 1326 he fled to the Emperor Louis of Bavaria's court, where he was soon joined by the General of the Franciscans and by William of Ockham. Though Louis, soon afterwards, was suing for peace with John XXII, Marsilius never sued, but died excommunicate and unrepentant, probably in 1342.

The very title of his work, *Defensor Pacis*, is a direct challenge to the quibble of Nicholas I. If we come down to facts, instead of postulating an ideal humanity and talking about it in academic language, then the real Defender of Peace must be the man who has the biggest battalions, that is, the Emperor. Therefore the pacification of Christendom is the Emperor's job. Look at history. Those who for the last two or three centuries have done most to trouble European peace are the popes. Therefore the Emperor's main task should be to put the Pope back into his proper place and to pare his claws.

Pressing still further the attack with the Pope's own weapons, Marsilius appeals to the Bible and the earliest Christian records. Here he displays a directness of insight and a scientific historical temper far beyond his age. He sees that, in spite of academic conventions, "historical method" is simply the application of common sense and hard work to history, just as the mason or the carpenter apply it to his own job. He does not note how the Fathers have commented, how this or that allegory has been excogitated. He goes straight to the document itself. One of the most treasured of these, professedly

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written by Pope Clement I. to the Apostle James, was looked upon as one of the foundations of Canon Law. Marsilius exploded it by the common-sense objection that it labours to explain to James the Apostle all kinds of little details which, as the real Clement must have known, were as familiar to the real James as his own fingers. The forgery has been admitted as such by all scholars of all Churches for many centuries past. but nothing could better illustrate the revolution wrought by men like Marsilius, beginning now to study things for themselves without hierarchical tutelage. On other points of New Testament history, Marsilius formed by direct study a series of views which he formulated systematically and logically. These may be briefly summed up under six heads. (1) No priest can wield secular rule or coercive jurisdiction, his duty is confined to the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments. (2) All priests are essentially equal, differences of rank and authority within the priesthood are purely inessential, the creations of human convenience. This crops up again at Basel. (3) The Bible shows only one Head of the Church—*i.e.* Christ. (4) The highest authority in the visible Church (militant) is not any single priest or bishop, but a General Council in which even select lay folk might sit and vote, and which the Emperor alone has the right to convoke. (5) Full coercive jurisdiction belongs not to the clergy but to the State, as represented by its prince. (6) The Decretals (upon which the Papal cause is mainly built) are of no valid force, the one binding authority on Christendom is the Bible. In short, the word *Church* means the whole body of Christians, and Modern Clericalism is a social poison.

Marsilius's fellow-rebel, the Franciscan William of

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Ockham, must be dealt with far more briefly here, in spite of his great importance. He was a product first of Oxford, with that appreciation of experimental science which was the heritage of Grosseteste and Bacon. He reacted violently against Realism, especially the extreme Realism of Duns Scotus. "Ockham's Razor" was the principle that "beings must not be multiplied without necessity" in other words, that it is a mere makeshift in philosophy when we import the doctrine of Ideas to explain difficulties otherwise inexplicable. For him, the reality is the Individual, the Universal exists only subjectively, in man's soul. To most problems he gave the same sort of answer that would be given by most modern philosophers, thus, even in his own day, his breach with the past was very clearly recognized. The followers of Aquinas and Scotus were called "Reales" or "Antiqui"; the Ockhamists, "Nominales" or "Moderni". His doctrines were condemned by the Paris authorities in 1339, and again in 1340, but Ockhamism remained victorious till after the Reformation, to which in fact it contributed. To Luther, Ockham was "my dear master". He himself kept his orthodoxy only by watertight compartments in his mind. The conflict between this modern Scholasticism and the ancient bred actual faction-fights. At Oxford, Duns became father to the opprobrious term of Dunce. At Prague, where the juxtaposition of Czech and German students gave already rich excuse for quarrels, the former were Realists to a man, and the latter Nominalists, and blood was shed freely in the streets under those banners. In the quarrel with John XXII, Ockham compares, as a thoroughgoing Scholastic, with Marsilius, the Citizen of the World. He lays as much stress on the Bible as

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Marsilius does : *Papa errare potest Biblia Sacra errare non potest*. He would have Christendom no longer an autocratic but a constitutional State : the ultimate authority should lie in a General Council , *Congregatio Christianorum fidelium* Peasants—even women and children—may, conceivably, keep a true Faith which the Hierarchy has gambled away. To this Council he would admit women as electors for woman has a soul to save as well as man So, at least, we may plainly infer from his great *Dialogue*, where the master speaks thus, and it is only the pupil who answers . “ This assertion about women (who, according to St Paul, must not teach) seems to me so unreasonable that I will no further treat of it ”

This question of precedence between Pope and General Council was decided, at last, by the Council of Constance (1415-18) Here the question of Papal Infallibility, which had long been vaguely in the air, came under formal, definite, and authoritative discussion. For centuries, words and phrases of strong adulation had been used towards popes, though never quite so strong as the pagans had used towards the Emperors of Rome Again, when St. Thomas defined heresy as that which obstinately denies doctrines “ after they have been defined by the Authority of the Universal Church,” he added, “ this authority resides chiefly in the Sovereign Pontiff ” (*Sum Theol* 2a, 2æ, Q. XI, art 2 *ad tert* ) But this also is vague, in face of a question of such immense importance John XXII (1327) did indeed take the question one step further, but by the *fast accompli*, without trouble of theological argument When Marsilius published his *Defensor Pacis*, John XXII. issued a bull condemning six of his propositions as heretical among

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them the assertion that the Church has no right to exercise "coercive punishment," except by grant from the State. The thing was done merely on the Pope's assertion that this was "contrary to Gospel truth," and that he had consulted theologians, who agreed with him. No attempt was made to quote from any conciliar decree - the ground was simply that the Pope's interpretation of Scripture differed here from that of Marsilius. So, again, with the same Pope in the matter of the Spiritual Franciscans. He condemned the doctrine of the Poverty of Christ, and burned men for differing from him, simply on the ground of his own interpretation of Scripture. and in this case he was contradicting a solemn bull of his own predecessor Nicholas III. This caused a schism in the Franciscan Order. Many held that John himself was a heretic, and that this tainted the legality of his successors.

Soon after, the Great Schism came, and finally the Council of Constance to end it. That Council got rid of three popes and created a fourth. It was thus compelled to discuss fully, as men had never discussed in all the preceding fourteen hundred years, the question of Papal Infallibility. Its final decree was so explicit that it might seem to preclude all further controversy. It ran, unanimously, "This Holy Synod . . . has received immediately from Jesus Christ a power to which all persons of whatever rank and dignity, not excepting the Pope himself, are bound to submit in those matters which concern the Faith." When the next most important Council, that of Basel, was confronted with the same problem, the two ablest treatises there produced were to the same effect, by Cardinal Nicholas Cusanus and Æneas Sylvius. Both, it is true, went over finally to the

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papal side at that Council ; and Æneas explicitly retracted and apologized after he himself had become Pope , but the facts amply justified Bossuet and the French clergy—that is, the most learned and living portion of the Roman Catholic Church—in their solemn Declaration of 1682 There they appealed to this decree of Constance, “ confirmed by the usage of the whole Church and of the Roman Pontiffs themselves,” and gave their own decision that a pope’s judgment on matters of faith “ is not irreversible, unless it shall have been confirmed by consent of the Church ” The Vatican Council of 1870, without explicitly alluding to this judgment, carefully drew up its decree in language which flatly contradicted it <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Full details in my *Papal Infallibility* (Faith Press, 1932), chap vi



## CHAPTER XV

### JOHN WYCLIF ([1324]-1384)

THIS was an Oxford scholar, at one time Master of Balliol, who owed much indirectly to Ockham, though in philosophy he represented a moderate Realist reaction. He first becomes conspicuous in 1374, when he is chosen to argue against the Pope's claim to that tribute from England to which John Lackland had pledged himself. In 1377 he was summoned before the bishops at St Paul's to answer the charge of teaching Marsilius's heresies. The Council ended in a brawl, and three months later the Pope issued five bulls in condemnation of his doctrines. He was protected by his popularity for his heresies represented what Englishmen were by this time ripe to receive. John of Gaunt was his great patron yet John's greatest enemy, the Black Prince's widow, protected Wyclif at the Council, and he was popular with the London citizens, with whom Gaunt's life was scarcely safe. For here was a man very remarkable in himself, and just such as the time and place required. Scores of pious Churchmen, especially from St. Bernard and St. Bonaventura onward, had written against clerical shortcomings almost as strongly as Wyclif. But here, for the first time, was a great scholar of irreproachable life who realized that the time of words was past, that nothing would do now but deeds, that the Church had

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shown herself incapable of reform from within, and reform must now be forced upon her from without. It is difficult to exaggerate the mass of evidence, from all possible quarters, as to the ignorance and low morality of the clergy, or the religious destitution of the people.<sup>1</sup> Wyclif saw, like Ockham, the supreme importance of the Bible in any Christian community. Ever since the twelfth century, by the confession of the most zealous defenders of orthodoxy, the strength of heresy had lain to a great extent in Bible knowledge, which (by the evidence of Inquisitors themselves) put the Catholics to shame. Here, then, Wyclif practised what others had hitherto only preached. It is doubtful whether any part of the so-called Wycliffite Bible is of his own translation, but it is beyond dispute that he stressed the Scriptures as the key to salvation, that the Lollard translation was made under his auspices, and that the possession of this book was often made a test of heresy or orthodoxy. When the Great Schism came in 1378, and armies were raised on either side, and Christendom was so divided that even saints doubted of the salvation of other saints who held by the rival Pope, then Wyclif was changed from a critic of the Papacy to a determined opponent. When two dogs fight for a bone, he said, the practical remedy is to get rid of the bone itself. And, finally, he advocated dis-endowment as a remedy for the state of the whole Church.

Here comes in his most distinctive doctrine, that of Dominion. He inherited it from his old Oxford teacher and predecessor in the Balliol mastership, Richard Fitzralph, Archbishop of Armagh, but he carried it

<sup>1</sup> For documentary evidence on these points, see chapters x-xiii of my *Medieval Panorama*, with the corresponding pages of notes.

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further than Fitzralph did, or, to all appearance, would have cared to do. It is deeply coloured, as medieval thought commonly was, by feudal notions. The word *dominus* had then a double meaning. For instance, a manorial magnate stood towards his serf not only as his landlord but also as master of his person. This must be kept in mind when we follow the theory of Dominion. God, of course, is the only true Ruler of the universe; therefore all mortals "hold" from Him as a feudal servant from his lord, by the tenure of serving Him. They also "hold" from each other, as the baron does from the king, or the peasant from his manorial lord, but all such intermediate lordships are based not upon eternal justice but upon temporary convenience. It is this principle of the individual's dependence upon God, and God alone, which distinguishes Wyclif's doctrine from most medieval systems.

God, then, being the only true *dominus*, therefore earthly lordship cannot be said truly to belong to any but those who are in a state of grace, who are right with God. To them He gives, with His own self, ideal lordship over the whole world, which they share in common, and which each enjoys more fully in proportion as he willingly shares with others. Thus, as St Paul says, "all things work together for good to them that love God." This is the ideal, but in fact we see the wicked often put above the righteous, in both senses of Dominion, both in possessions and in authority. Here, says Wyclif, is no real lordship, and the feudal analogy comes in. Men "hold," not unconditionally, but always under definite conditions, in virtue of certain services rendered to the *dominus*. In default of these services, the right disappears. Therefore even the greatest of earthly rulers has only a

false title if he is a bad man. No inferior lord has a right to alienate any part of his dominion without the consent of his superior—therefore no king can enfeoff any baron, in justice, without God's consent. Thus the bad man, from the beginning, had no rights in any strict sense. Nor, even if he had, could he claim continuance of those rights, for he has broken the contract. No grant is ever made except on condition of service rendered, and the wicked man fails daily in due service to God. Thus the original grant is forfeited *ipso facto*, right he has none, and we may quote Christ's words as reported by Luke: "From him that hath not, that also which he seemeth to have shall be taken away." Thus no man in mortal sin has any right to God's gifts, while the man who stands right with his Creator—stands in grace, as St. Augustine puts it—has them not only in right, but also in fact. "Lordship is founded in Grace."

This is a startling thesis, leading to the corollary which Wyclif himself drew—as all men ought to live in God's grace, so all ought to be lords together of the world. All property should be held in common, as it was in Paradise before the Fall. Yet Wyclif neither anticipated nor justified the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. The rebels are never accused by contemporaries of heresy, nor the Lollards (with few exceptions) of communism. Wyclif had no intention of putting his logical conclusions into immediate practice; he simply meant to undermine the conservative position by philosophical argument. He exploded the idea that, because clerical or lay lords did exercise wealth and power, therefore they had a natural and indefeasible right. Sinners may indeed exercise lordship, but this is only on sufferance, in virtue of social conventions. Yet even a social convention is a

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very real thing, and it may well be better to suffer this abuse, however scandalous, than to sweep it away too indiscriminately. Sometimes "God must obey the Devil"—an epigrammatic phrase which naturally shocked some of Wyclif's adversaries. In the meantime, however, let it be clearly understood that, when these men talk of their *rights*, they are speaking of that which does not exist. And as to the clergy in especial—though this is a corollary which he definitely drew only later—if King and Parliament are convinced that the Dominion now exercised is not for the good of society, then there is no reason in divine justice against—or rather, there is every reason for—depriving them of an authority and a wealth which cannot benefit, in any true sense, even the misuser. In other words, he anticipated Fabian Socialism. Without being a Communist, he held that the balance of ideal justice is on that side, and that the true reasons for resisting any change in that direction are reasons of expediency, more or less temporary. God for a while must obey the Devil, rather than plunge mankind into a turmoil in which the fight for justice will defeat its own ends.

He showed similar Fabianism in the question of serfdom. He is, I believe, the only medieval philosopher who refuses to justify that institution in theory. Here, again, he shows no inclination towards pushing his theory to its practical conclusions, but he does undermine the conservative position. When a lord speaks of his rights over his serf, those exist only in so far as they are founded in grace. Wyclif is one of the earliest and most definite examples of what has been called the English genius for compromise—a genius due to peculiarity not of race but of circumstance. Not having been invaded since

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1066, we have never suffered from the worst of political curses, a foreign enemy finding his own profit in fostering civil war among the conquered. Thus our political differences have always been comparatively simple, due to the eternal division between the mind which most stresses progress and the mind most inclined to cherish inherited good. In any society ruled only by this healthy division, time shows each party that it cannot hope to exterminate the other, and therefore must suffer it. However certain each is of his own divine cause, yet he must live and let live, God must obey the Devil. Langland at the same moment said much the same in *Piers Plowman*: "Who suffereth more than God?"

## CHAPTER XVI

### NICHOLAS OF CUES

CARDINAL NICHOLAS OF CUES (Cusanus) is commonly reckoned as the last great thinker of the Middle Ages proper. His greatest work, the *Concordantia Catholica*, was written at and for the Council of Basel. "It is almost the last book which treats Christendom as a single organic system, in which a complete theory of politics, whole and parts, is set forth"<sup>1</sup>. Its main theme is the necessity of harmony, and this he illustrates by appealing to analogies between spiritual and physical phenomena, according to the notions of his time. The same laws, he maintains, regulate ecclesiastical as secular government. In agreement with Marsilius, he practically anticipates Rousseau's theory of the Social Contract. Popular consent is the basis of government—that is God's will, a matter of natural right. Since all men are by nature free, the dominance of any one finds its legitimation only in the consent of the rest. The ruler is the chosen executor of the law. There is no room in this *Concordantia* for papal absolutism. Though Cusanus became afterwards one of the main papal instruments, both in politics and in the struggle for monastic reform, he never retracted this theory, with all its far-reaching consequences.

<sup>1</sup> J. N. Figgis, *From Gerson to Grotius*, p. 68, where an admirable brief summary will be found.

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But a much less known work of his, almost his last, written at the end of a most laborious life, deserves more emphasis in a volume of this kind, whose object is to present Medieval Thought rather in significant episodes than in encyclopædic sequence. This is his *Dialogus de Pace*, with its sub-title, *Concerning the Concordance of Faith*. The extraordinary interest here is in tracing how the march of time, introducing outside facts which could no longer be ignored, was beginning to leave Scholasticism stranded high and dry.

The book owed its birth to much the same motives as those which had inspired St. Augustine's *City of God*. The Turks took Constantinople in 1453 as Alaric had taken Rome in 410, and Greek refugees now flocked to Italy as Roman refugees had fled to Syria. As Jerome had broken down for a while under that calamity, so Cusanus (he tells us himself) fell under a cloud of melancholy by which he was transported as in a vision. Here he saw present troubles in truer perspective, more *sub specie aeternitatis*, and pondered over God's teaching through these events. The treatise is of great interest both in its strength and in its weakness. On the one hand, the advancing Turk had forced upon this greatest thinker of the day a bold idea. Might not this be a call to religious unity? If this apparently irresistible military force is destined to overrun the Western World, as it has already overrun the East, why not come to such terms as may make good out of all this? Men's discordant ideals and fashions are frequently religious, why not obtain peace on the principle of respecting other creeds and religious fashions, in so far as they deserve our respect? Yet, on the other hand, though in this root idea of Cusanus there was great courage, when we come to read the treatise



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we find how much of that was only the valour of ignorance

The Vision resolves itself into a series of dialogues. In chapter III the Verbum, "the Word made Flesh," takes the part of God the Father in a series of formal disputations modelled on the methods of the Schools. This Verbum calls before him fifteen wise men, representatives of all the religions in the world, with each of these in turn he begins to argue. The first of these wise men is the *Greek*. To him Verbum proves that "all of you, though ye be named as of diverse religions, yet amid all your diversity ye presuppose one thing, which ye call Wisdom." Then comes the *Italian*, to whom Verbum proves that "Wisdom is God, One and Single and Eternal, the Beginning of all things." The Italian assents, and then the *Muslim* chimes in with, "Nothing could be more clearly and truly said." Verbum, therefore, has little difficulty in persuading him that, if people address themselves in prayer to the memory of men who have led holy lives (choosing these as their intercessors before God), then, so long as they do not worship such intercessors as actually divine, but only as worthy of *dulia*, while for God alone they reserve *latria*, then "this will not contradict the One Religion, and in this manner the multitude might easily be set at rest"—*quietaretur*. Here the *Hindoo* comes in, and explains that in his country it is difficult to wean the people from their inveterate idolatry, "by reason of the answers which are given by idolatrous images." Those, answers Verbum, are seldom really given except by the priests themselves, or, sometimes, by the Devil's cunning deception. The Hindoo then grants the possibility of opening his people's eyes to the folly of belief in these images which "have mouths, but speak

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not " But he raises another difficulty . How can this Roman belief in the Trinity be reconciled with the Unity of God ? Here, of course, comes a long and perplexing discussion . The *Chaldean* then joins in " Even though the wise should comprehend these things, yet they are beyond the common herd " Our Cardinal, of course, has his elaborate explanation ready, which extorts admiration from our next personage, the *Jew*. This person begins " The Ever-blessed Trinity, which cannot be denied, hath been excellently explained . For a certain prophet, revealing this to us as briefly as possible, said that he had asked God how He who giveth to other things the fecundity of generation could be Himself 'sterile' . And although the Jews flee from the Trinity for the reason that they think it to be a plurality, yet if they understand that it is the simplest fecundity they will very gladly acquiesce " .

It will be already seen how little this can be compared with a true Socratic dialogue, and with what absurd ease the objectors swallow the most superficial arguments . The rest may therefore be severely abridged . The Frenchman, *Gallus*, comes in with an objection smacking of scholastic dialectics . therefore Verbum here gives place to St Peter, the official exponent on all matters of dogma . To the *Persian*, who comes next, St Peter quotes the story from the Apocryphal Gospels, how the boy Christ made little birds of clay and taught them to fly . The Persian points out that this may impress a Muslim, who finds similar things in his Koran, but not a Jew . The Apostle answers " In their own Scriptures [the Jews] have all things concerning Christ , but, following the literal sense, they will not understand . Yet this resistance of the Jews impedeth not concord ;

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for they are few in number, and will not be able to trouble the world with their armies," as the Turks are doing at Constantinople! The *Syrian*, the *Spaniard*, the *Turk*, the *German*, and the *Tartar* now appear in turn, with their different objections. With this last, Paul comes in and takes the place of Peter—as Apostle of the Gentiles, this is more his speciality—and it is he also who answers the *Armenian*, *Bohemian*, and *Englishman*. It is remarkable that none of these answers takes the form which would be expected from any Scholastic of the thirteenth century. The Virgin Birth is defended not by an appeal to the New Testament and the creeds, but on *a priori* grounds. In support of the Future Life, Peter argues "the Jews are willing to die for the observance of their Law and for its holiness—therefore, unless they believed that they would thus earn happiness after death by reason of exalting the zeal for their Law above life itself, they would not die." When the Tartar objects that Christians do what seems abominable, since, after their sacrifice, "they devour Him whom they worship, I see not how union could be brought about in those matters," St Paul gives no direct answer. As to circumcision, he emphasizes its indifference in itself, and suggests that its performance or rejection might be decided by majority-vote in each region, or even, for the sake of peace, the majority might conform to the minority in a matter so unimportant. Though the Bohemian, who raises the question of Holy Communion, represents a nation which was still in open rebellion on that subject, St Paul shows the same vague tolerance. "Since this Sacrament is an outward sign, to him who hath Faith it is not so necessary that there could be no salvation without it—it sufficeth for salvation to

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believe, and thus to eat the Food of Life." By the time we reach the Englishman, almost all pretence of the original dramatic consistency has disappeared. He is utilized for a series of objections which seem only to represent the rest of the mess which the Dialogue has not yet cleared up. He finally asks "What of fasts, Church offices, abstinence from food and drink, the forms of prayer, and other such things?" Paul answers: "Where conformity of manner cannot be found, let the nations be suffered (saving Faith and Peace) in their own ceremonies. Indeed, Faith may be increased by a certain diversity, when each nation may strive by study and diligence to make its own rite the more splendid, in order that it may exceed another in this respect and thus earn more honour before God and praise in this world." And Cusanus ends.

"Therefore, after these matters had thus been treated with the Wise Men of the nations, very many books were produced by those who have written concerning the observances of the Ancients, and certain excellent writings in every language, as Marcus Varro among the Latins, and the Greek Eusebius who collected the diversity of religions, and many others. When these had been examined, it was found that all this diversity had been rather in rites than in the worship of the one God, for it was found from all the scriptures collected together that all had always presupposed such a God from the very beginning, and had worshipped Him in all religions, although the simplicity of the multitude (which hath often been seduced by the opposing power of the Prince of Darkness) failed to see what it was doing. Therefore in the Heaven of Reason a concord of religions was concluded after the manner afore described, and command was made by the King of Kings that the Wise Men should return and persuade their nations to the unity of true worship, and that Administrator-Spirits should lead them and assist them, and that then, with plenipotentiary powers on all sides, they should flock together to Jerusalem as a common centre, and accept the One Faith in the name of all, and confirm Perpetual Peace upon that foundation, in order that the Creator of All Things may be extolled in peace, Who is blessed world without end."

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Here is a naïve attempt to disarm the brute force that is knocking now at the gate, by ignoring the most pressing facts, and preaching peace when the very elements of peace were as yet completely wanting. The very boldness of Cusanus's thesis is a testimony to the sense of desperate need, and the untenability of the old time-honoured fortresses of thought. When the greatest philosopher of his age, learned also in divinity and the physical sciences as they were then understood, was driven to such shifts as this, we cannot wonder that in Italy—where men had more Classical learning than elsewhere, and the cities had gone through almost every stage of evolution between republicanism and despotism, and where trade and industry had grown into something like modern conditions—nearly all the keenest intellects were already treating Scholasticism as outworn.

## CHAPTER XVII

### CONCLUSION

WHAT is the reader's reaction to this brief review of some of the leading lines in the thought of our remote ancestors? How does it fit in with his present experience, or suggest fresh avenues?

This must depend, to a considerable extent, upon his sympathy with the past gropings and stumblings of mankind, and upon his own belief that the only way to success is by accepting the risk of failure. We are none of us infallible—not even when a crushing majority in a democratic country thinks it sees its way perfectly clearly. He who is too nervously afraid of being duped becomes commonly, sooner or later, the victim of some peculiarly gross deceit. Our task is not so much to avoid error, as to avoid its repetition. From that point of view, there are few stories better adapted than that of Medieval Thought to illustrate what the great Lessing called “the Education of the Human Race.” What signifies is not the painful ignorance natural to a world over which generation after generation of wild men had swept, but the struggle to rise out of that ignorance, and the final success. It is only in the teeth of the actual records that we can represent the centuries of ecclesiastical unity in Western Christendom as a golden age. The true greatness of those men was that they struggled

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persistently, and often successfully, to discover things which are so universally recognized to-day that we feel no gratitude for them. Nobody in modern Britain can feel more keenly the imperfection of society around him and the difficulty of mending it, nobody can yearn more pathetically for a remote past in which (he thinks) men were more moral and wiser and happier, than Roger Bacon did six and a half centuries ago—yet he did not suffer this to lame his energies. St. Gregory I, the converter of England, was convinced that this world would last but few years after his time—perhaps not even so long as that—yet he spent himself in as manful attempts to mend it as if he had believed it would last for ever. Until we have realized that the greatness of past great men was less in what they did than in what they tried to do—in the bleeding hands and feet with which they struggled toward heights which have been gradually won for us—we have not begun to understand medieval history. On the other hand, when once this is grasped, nothing in the past records can seem sordid, *sub specie aeternitatis*. Man is, on the whole, a teachable animal, most men learn something, at least, from past errors. Thus, the further we go back the more likely we are to find things which have since been unlearned things which in present-day Britain must shock us, but which, understanding, we pardon to the comparative youth and inexperience of an earlier world. It is not only a more consoling belief, but also a more manly, to regard this earth as a scene of gradually increasing order, than as a globe where order did once reign, but which is condemning itself to the steady increase of disorder. We, with past records so abundantly at our disposal, are inexcusable if we fall into that practically

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universal error of medieval thinkers, that each generation is worse than its fathers, and worse still than its grand-fathers.

So much for the general interpretation of these men's thoughts, from St. Augustine down to Cusanus. At a bird's-eye view, the evolution seems natural enough. The educator best suited for that half-barbarian world of the Dark Ages was Augustine, he who did not despair when Rome fell, but who elicited from the very ruin that root-lesson of all Christianity, that the highest success may be bred from the most dismal apparent failure. Learning thus from Augustine, the early Western Church was, in fact, sitting at Plato's feet. Then, with the rediscovery of Aristotle, came another immense impulse, less mystical and more dialectical, which culminated in St. Thomas's magnificent attempt to combine in one symmetrical synthesis that Bible, which must be accepted unhesitatingly as revealed truth, with all that was most scientific in ancient philosophical thought. This movement also gradually spent itself—men began more and more openly to doubt of the very foundations upon which Scholasticism had built. Then a far wider field of ancient classics was partly rediscovered, partly studied with new eyes and bolder freedom, and now came the Renaissance with Modern Thought in its train.

Every system has its defects, and most critics would agree with Rashdall that Scholasticism was at once too dogmatic and too disputatious. The first half of this verdict is at least as important as the second. Yet Professor A. N. Whitehead, in the first chapter of his universally acclaimed *Science in the Modern World*, would seem to write very loosely in applying so fre-



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quently and emphatically to Medieval Thought, as a whole, the terms *reason* and *rational*, where the true word would be *rationalism*, *rationalistic*. For surely (if comparisons must be made) it is less reasonable, less rational, in the true sense of that word, to argue with impeccable logic from unverified premises, as the Scholastic so often did, than to argue less strictly from tried and trustworthy assumptions. It is told of Charles II that, in the infancy of the Royal Society, he amused himself by appealing for the reason why a dead fish weighs more than a live one. Many subtle and logical solutions were excogitated by members of the Society, but nobody had thought of verifying the supposed basic facts. This is only an exaggeration of what was normal throughout nearly all the Middle Ages. The foundation of those men's thought was dogmatic. It had been fixed by the Bible, the Fathers, and the early Councils. Professor Gilson brings this out clearly enough, and Professor Whitehead himself refers to it in other places. Moreover, in his last chapter but one, he puts the matter in a nutshell. "In *formal logic*, a contradiction is the signal of a defeat, but in the evolution of *real knowledge* it marks the first step in progress towards a victory" (*Italics mine.*) Again, in his second chapter "The trouble is . . . not with what [an author] knows he has assumed, but with what he has unconsciously assumed." Aquinas, the impeccable model of a formal logician, accepted without serious hesitation a series of traditional doctrines, such as the inerrancy of the Bible, which forced him to the conclusion that it was incumbent upon one Christian to burn another for religious nonconformity. Unconsciously he sinned with all his contemporaries against that text which, as Professor Whitehead points

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out, ought to be a touchstone of true Christianity : "Let both grow together until the harvest." In the Scholastic era it was only at the risk of his life that any man could seriously dispute the fundamentals. That set a premium upon disputatiousness about minor points ; upon that hair-splitting from which the Renaissance turned so impatiently away ; upon that spirit which made Erasmus complain . "The Schoolmen will have their dogmas received as articles of faith." Not, of course, that the really great men did not concentrate mainly on really great things ; but the rank and file wasted in mere dialectics much energy that would have been far more profitably employed in unostentatious hod-work which would have strengthened the foundations. Thus, in spite of Bacon and his school, painfully little was done for mathematics, the philosophical value of which Professor Whitehead has every right to emphasize in a whole chapter. Even less was done at the universities for physical science, and anatomy was practically forbidden. History, apart from mere annals, scarcely existed, though any determined effort would have shown that the medieval obstacles, however great in comparison with our modern facilities, were far from prohibitive. The Monastic Orders could easily have exacted a tenfold greater multiplication of books from their members.<sup>1</sup> The universities did, it is true, develop a system for their own textbooks which far outdid all that the monks had ever attempted—witness M. Jean Destrez's fascinating monograph *La Pécia*—yet they went no further. The *Chronicle* of Matthew Paris was the greatest English work of its kind—perhaps the greatest in Europe—yet Dr. Montague James was convinced

<sup>1</sup> I hope to prove this statistically in vol. IV of *Five Centuries of Religion*.

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that it never existed in as many as half a dozen copies. Even with the Bible, not only did abbeys and universities fail to produce an approximately perfect text by some such system as Islam invented for preserving the text of the Koran, but the workmanlike study of its meaning was also neglected. Men saw not only an innovation, but a suspicious novelty, when Erasmus's friend, Dean Colet, lectured at Oxford upon the plain sense of St. Paul's epistles: not only upon the books as a mine for allegorical expositions, but upon what the saint actually intended by his words. The Renaissance and Reformation brought far greater freedom, in spite of the too frequent lapses of reformers and scientists from their own principles. The human mind, thus liberated, has gradually realized that a personal God, personal immortality, and fundamentals of that kind never have been proved, and probably never can, by philosophical argument. Thus, under an agreement to differ, each intellect can now follow its own natural line. Those moderns who accept St. Thomas's presuppositions are perfectly free to study and admire the whole marvellous edifice which he built upon them, and, in fact, many do so with less hesitation than was felt by high Church authorities in his own day. Meanwhile, those others who reject the presuppositions of the thirteenth century, or at least refuse to make up their minds on questions so difficult and so long debated, turn naturally to physical science or history or mathematics or modern languages, subjects unrecognized in the medieval curriculum except so far as arithmetic and very elementary geometry were taught, or astronomy sufficient for computation of the date of Easter.

Thus, while giving all due credit to the Roman Church

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—*Ecclesia Romana*, as she called herself in the Middle Ages—for her care to maintain the ideas of Order and Universality, yet we must make heavy deductions for the jealousy with which she strove to strangle all rival efforts. Under her claim of Universality lay much that was narrowly parochial, with a narrowness all the more fatal because it was serenely unconscious. This, as we have seen, was partly due to the separation which Latin made between academic and ordinary life, partly again to the similar separation involved in the law of celibacy. Those separations cut deep into ordinary life, for the higher thought of no age can afford to neglect its lower thought. The Priest said at Mass what the congregation understood little or not at all. The movement for a vernacular Liturgy was at first mainly heretical; not until the verge of the Reformation did it become strong; and it has never yet prevailed.<sup>1</sup> Thus there was in those days more artificiality than there had been in ancient, or was destined to be in modern thought. But artificiality always implies a certain leaven of insincerity. If we apply Descartes's rule, and scrutinize men's actions as well as their words, we shall find that the great gulf existing between theory and practice appears even greater in the Middle Ages than elsewhere. We have seen how the Ecumenical Council of Vienne recognized the necessity of teaching Oriental languages as an obvious step towards the conversion of Greeks and Muslims. Nothing would have been easier than to maintain the professorships prescribed by that decree, yet practically nothing was done. So, again, with the decrees prescribing that in every village the priest or clerk should keep school *gratis*. It is difficult to exaggerate the extent to which our

<sup>1</sup> I have dealt with religious education in *Medieval Panorama*, chap. xv

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ancestors were accustomed to regard the law as a pious aspiration rather than a solid fact.<sup>1</sup> Most significant of all, perhaps, was the theory and practice of Usury, which engrossed a very considerable share of university thought. The original Christian prohibition of lending at interest in any form whatever was whittled away to a considerable extent by St Thomas Aquinas and later thinkers. Yet, on the one hand, St Thomas's own conclusion is flatly contradictory, on one most important point, to a recent Papal decree, *Naviganti*, which had been enshrined in Canon Law<sup>2</sup>, on the other, neither his decisions nor the Pope's were actually followed in general practice. The kings of France officially, and municipal authorities in other countries more discreetly, contented themselves with regulating the legal amount of interest, without any reference whatever to the Church rules. So was it, again, to a great extent, with another equally famous Scholastic and Ecclesiastical doctrine, that of the Just Price. There was much of value in this, but it broke down so sadly in practice that even the theory was finally neglected for nearly three centuries. This is admirably brought out by Professor R. H. Tawney in his *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, a classical work which may now be bought for sixpence. Space fails me to treat this question here in any but the briefest summary of what may be found in that volume, with references to the pages of the original 1926 edition.

“‘The Capitalist spirit’ is as old as history, and was not, as has sometimes been said, the offspring of Puritanism” (p 226) For the bulk of medieval agriculturists “the golden age of peasant prosperity is, except

<sup>1</sup> I have tried to bring this out in *Medieval Panorama*, chap xxvii

<sup>2</sup> See my paper in *History* (July 1921)

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here and there, a romantic myth, at which no one would have been more surprised than the peasants themselves " (p. 57). The earliest homes of pronounced capitalism were where the Church was, or should have been, strong

" In the Europe of the early Renaissance the heart of the movement had been Italy. In the Europe of the Reformation it was the Low Countries. The economic capital of the new civilization was Antwerp. The institution which best symbolized its eager economic energies was the international money-market and produce-exchange. Its typical figure, the paymaster of princes, was the international financier. Then came the great Discoveries, and Antwerp, the first city to tap the wealth, not of an inland sea, but of the ocean, stepped into a position of unchallenged pre-eminence almost unique in European history "

About 1500, the greatest single capitalists in Europe were in south Germany and Tyrol. The richest firm was that of the Fuggers, whose head could boast to a Spanish Cardinal that he had lent the money for enabling every see in Germany to pay the first-fruits demanded by Rome on the appointment of each new bishop, and to some sees twice or thrice. That, he added, was even more lucrative than his silver mines and other sources of revenue. " He died [1525] in the odour of sanctity, a good Catholic and a Count of the Empire, having seen his firm pay 54 per cent for the preceding sixteen years " (p. 79). Down to the time of the Armada, " it was predominantly Catholic cities which were the commercial capitals of Europe, and Catholic bankers who were its leading financiers " (p. 84). " Compared with these financial dynasties, Hapsburgs, Valois, and Tudors were puppets dancing on wires held by a money-power to which political struggles were irrelevant except as an opportunity for gain " (p. 78). When Luther's great orthodox opponent, the friar Eck, travelled to procure from the University of Bologna a

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decision relaxing the usual teaching against usury, it was the Fuggers who "thought it worth while to finance an expedition in quest of so profitable a truth" (p 81).

For, in fact, not only in the Reformation generation, but far beyond, Protestant theology was as anti-usurious as Catholic. Reformers, like reactionaries in our present age, "sighed for a vanished age of peasant prosperity. The social theory of Luther, who hated commerce and capitalism, has its nearest modern analogy in the Distributive State of Mr. Belloc and Mr. Chesterton" (p 92). Calvin, again, is most ignorantly attacked nowadays by those who have evidently never read him. "Calvinism had little pity for poverty; but it distrusted wealth as it distrusted all influences that distract the aim or relax the fibres of the soul, and, in the first flush of its youthful austerity, it did its best to make life unbearable for the rich" But from Luther and Calvin, as time went on, the world of commerce drifted away on this subject as it drifted from Aquinas and the Schoolmen. For the teaching on this subject, almost more than on any other, had conflicted with men's actions. The theory of Usury and Just Price, however valuable in essence, had always been too academic. It had too much ignored things which not only went on daily under men's eyes, but were in part, at least, fundamental manifestations of human nature in the face of rapidly changing world conditions.

In Protestant, as in Scholastic thought, this defect was fundamental: "Their obstinate refusal to revise old formulæ in the light of new facts exposed them helpless to a counter-attack, in which the whole fabric of their philosophy, truth and fantasy alike, was overwhelmed together. They despised knowledge, and knowledge

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destroyed them " (p. 186). Yet it is natural and right that our own generation should recognize all that was true in that medieval theory, and attempt in practice to walk rather by generosity than by the strictest logic of what may seem common sense, "The true descendant of the doctrines of Aquinas is the labour theory of value. The last of the Schoolmen was Karl Marx" (p. 36).

I have written freely in this little book because it is not presumptuous to judge the great men of the past unsparingly in this fashion. In so far as they were really great, they themselves would have been the first to welcome such frankness. We ordinary moderns are "dwarfs on the shoulders of giants," and it is our own fault if we cannot see farther than they. We are sometimes told that historians must not judge, they must simply relate "the thing as it happened." Yet that is plainly impossible—no two men, in the face of the same witnesses or written documents, will form exactly the same impression of what happened. History, argues Croce, is *experience*—each mind makes its own picture as best it can from such evidence as it can collect. Nor need we be too distressed at such necessary divergences, for, on cold survey, we shall find that agreement among sincere minds far outweighs disagreement, however we may be tempted to pay exaggerated attention to the latter. Many men will disagree about many points for a long time, but not all men on all points for all time. Here, as elsewhere, we may follow Descartes, and remember that the prime factor for getting at the truth—such truth as our own mind is able to grasp—is the honest desire to get at the truth. History is a battle, but a battle in which everybody wins except the man who ceases to fight.



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Thus it would seem impossible, in face of the facts, to maintain the extreme view which would imply that thought was at its zenith in the Middle Ages, and therefore that all modern thought has been progressive debasement of the human intellect. On the other hand, we must equally reject the other extreme, too common a few generations ago, which treated it with contempt as a worn-out thing. The main strength of Medieval Thought was that it sought obstinately for an orderly Universe, beyond and above this disorderly earth. Those men were obsessed by the idea of order, of unity, that was a reflexion of their painful social experience, anything rather than a return to the barbarous lawlessness and ignorance of the Dark Ages. This alone can explain, and even go a little way to palliate, the Inquisition. Order and unity at all costs, even by the most frankly Procrustean method. Thus the insistence upon an Orderly Universe was far greater here than in either Ancient or Modern Thought. Man is born with a sense of Order, which is strongest in the best characters. Even if this instinct is due rather to the wish than to the actual facts around us, it must yet tend gradually to create the thing that it desires. The best men of the Middle Ages steadily believed that the Unseen matters far more than the Seen; and they acted upon this belief. However we may try to reduce morality to enlightened selfishness, so long as it insists upon some final reward or punishment for our acts, it will always remain true that enlightened selfishness is more civilized than selfishness unenlightened. The most grudging critic, therefore, must give credit to a philosophy which compelled strict attention to considerations which the multitude commonly neglects amid the multitude of its own petty

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distractions. Again, the modern man who may most unhesitatingly repudiate St. Thomas's main conclusions has yet reason to thank him for his greatness. In default of positive proofs, negatives also assist the march of intellect. If one of the greatest of philosophic minds, carefully followed, has led the world into a blind alley on any subject, that is a warning signpost far more emphatic than if merely frivolous minds had dealt with it and failed.

And, apart from the substance of Medieval Thought, its methods mark a definite advance for the human intellect, by perfecting the weapons of logic and the philosophic vocabulary. Here it has done for modern philosophy what alchemy did for chemistry. Even in its decay, Scholasticism trained the mind to exact thought in many directions; so that the universities supplied society with men well qualified to serve State and Church as lawyers and statesmen. Professor Gilson is probably right in his insistence that the French mind of to-day owes a direct debt to the Quartier Latin with its interminable disputations. "The old dream of the University of Paris, which was at first the Church's dream, still lives in every French brain. . . . Thence comes our innate taste for abstractions, for *a priori* reasoning, for logical clearness, and our habit, so surprising to Anglo-Saxon minds, of regulating our conduct upon abstract principles, instead of submitting them to the exigencies of fact."

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